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A. H. Stockley

1892

THE BLUE PAVILIONS.

Works by Q.

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THE BLUE PAVILIONS.

BY

Q

AUTHOR OF "THE SPLENDID SPUR," "NOUGHTS AND CROSSES," ETC.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED:

LONDON, PARIS & MELBOURNE.

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TO A FORMER SCHOOLFELLOW.

My Dear ——,

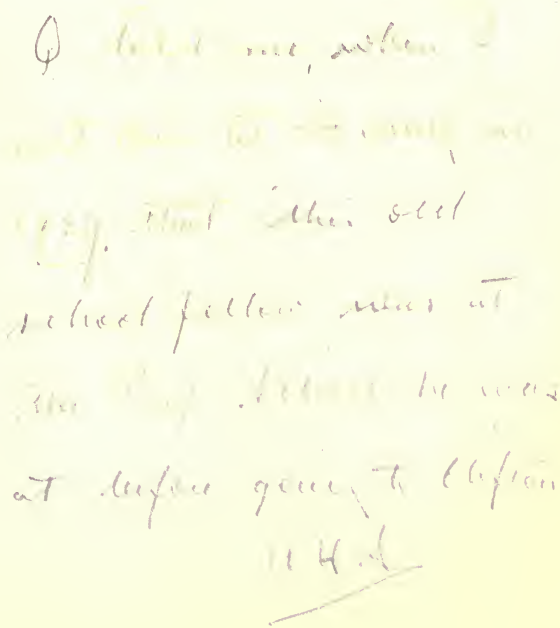
I will not write your name, for we have long been strangers; and I, at any rate, have no desire to renew our friendship. It is now ten years and more from the end of that summer term when we shook hands at the railway station, and went east and west with swelling hearts; and since then no report has come of you. In the meantime you may have died, or grown rich and esteemed; but that you have remained the boy I knew is clearly beyond hope.

You were a genius then, and wrote epic poetry. I assume that you have found it worth while to discontinue that habit, for I never see your name among the publishers' announcements. But your poetry used to be magnificent when you recited it in the shadow of the deserted fives-court; and I believe you spoke sincerely when you assured me that my stories, too, were something above contempt.

To the boy that was you I would dedicate a small tale, crammed with historical inaccuracy.

To-day, no doubt you would recognise the story of Captain Seth Jermy and the *Nightingale* frigate, and point out that I have put it seventeen years too early. But in those days you would neither have known nor cared. And the rest of the book is far belated. Q.

Shiplake, 20th November, 1891.



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The Blue Pavilions.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN JOHN AND CAPTAIN JEMMY.

At noonday, on the 11th of October, 1673, the little seaport of Harwich, beside the mouth of the River Stour, presented a very lively appearance. More than a hundred tall ships, newly returned from the Dutch War, rode at anchor in the haven, their bright masts swaying in the sunshine above the thatched and red-tiled roofs of the town. Tarry sailors in red and grey kersey suits, red caps and flat-heeled shoes, jostled in the narrow streets and hung about St. Nicholas' Churchyard, in front of the Admiralty House, wherein the pursers sat before bags and small piles of money paying off the crews. Soldiers crowded the tavern doors—men in soiled uniforms of the Admiral's regiment, the Buffs and the 1st Foot Guards, some with bandaged heads and arms, and the most still yellow after their sea-sickness, but all intrepidly toasting the chances of peace and the girls in opposite windows.

Above their laughter, and along every street or passage opening on the harbour—from Cock and Pye Quay, from Lambard's stairs, the Castleport, and half a dozen other landing stages—came wafted the shouts of captains, pilots, boatswains, caulkers, longshore men; the noise of artillery and stores unlading; the tack-tack of mallets in the dockyard, where Sir Anthony Deane's new ship the *Harwich* was rising on the billyways, and whence the blown odours of pitch and hemp and timber, mingling with the landward breeze, drifted all day long into the townsfolk's nostrils, and filled their very kitchens with the savour of the sea.

In the thick of these scents and sounds, and within a cool doorway, before which the shadow of a barber's pole rested on the cobbles, reclined Captain John Barker—a little wry-necked gentleman, with a prodigious hump between his shoulders, and legs that dangled two inches off the floor. His wig was being curled by an apprentice at the back of the shop, and his natural scalp shone as bare as a billiard-ball; but two patches of brindled grey hair stuck out from his brow above a pair of fierce greenish eyes set about with a complexity of wrinkles. Just now, a coating of lather covered his shrewish underjaw.

The dress of this unlovely old gentleman well became his rank as captain of his Majesty's frigate, the *Wasp*, but went very ill with his figure—being, indeed, a square-cut coat of scarlet, laced with gold, a long-flapped blue waistcoat, black breeches and stockings. Enormous buckles adorned the thick-soled shoes which he drummed impatiently against the legs of his chair.

The barber—a round, bustling fellow—stropped his razor and prattled gossip. On a settle to the right a couple of townsmen smoked, listened, and waited their turn with an educated patience.

"Changes, indeed, since you left us, Captain John," the barber began, his razor hovering for the first scrape.

"Wait a moment. You were about to take hold of me by the nose. If you do it, I'll run you through. I thought you'd like to be warned, that's all. Go on with your chatter."

"Certainly, Captain John—'tis merely a habit——"

"Break yourself of it."

"I will, sir. But, as I was saying, the changes will astonish you that have been at sea so long. In the first place, a riding post started from hence to London and from London hither a-gallop with brazen trumpet and loaded pistols,

to keep his Majesty certified every day of the Fleet's doings, and the Fleet of his Majesty's wishes, and all Harwich a-tremble half the night under its bedclothes, but consoled to find the King taking so much notice of it. And the old gaol moved from St. Austin's Gate, and a new one building this side of Church Street, where Calamy's Store used to stand—with a new town-hall, too——"

Here, as he paused to scrape the captain's cheek, one of the two townsmen on the settle—a square man in grey, with a red waistcoat—withdrew the long pipe from his mouth and groaned heavily.

"What's that?" asked the hunchback, snappishly.

"That, sir, is Mr. Pomphlett," the barber explained. "He disapproves of the amount spent in decorating the new hall with pillars, rails, balusters, and what not; for the King's arms, to be carved over the mayor's seat and richly gilt, are to be a private gift of Mr. Isaac Betts, and the leathern fire-buckets to be hung round the wall——"

Mr. Pomphlett emitted another groan, which the barber good-naturedly tried to drown in talk. Captain Barker heard it, however.

"There it is again!"

"Yes, sir. You see Mr. Pomphlett allows his public spirit to run high. He says——"

The little captain jerked round in his chair, escaping a gash by a hair's breadth, and addressed the heavy citizen—

"Mr. Pomphlett, sir, it was not for the sake of listening to your observations upon public affairs that I came straight off my ship to this shop, but to hear the news."

The barber coughed. Mr. Pomphlett feebly traced a curve in the air with his pipe-stem, and answered sulkily—

"I s-said nun-nothing. I f-felt unwell."

"He suffers," interposed Mr. Pomphlett's neighbour on the settle, a long-necked man in brown, "from the wind; don't you, Pomphlett?"

Mr. Pomphlett nodded with an aggrieved air, and sucked his pipe.

"Death," continued the man in brown, by way of setting the conversation on its legs again, "has been busy in Harwich, Barker."

"Ah! now we come to business? Barber, who's dead?"

"Alderman Croten, sir."

"Tut-tut. Croten gone?"

"Yes, sir; palsy took him at a ripe age. And Abel's gone, the town crier; and old Mistress Pinch's bad leg carried her from us

last Christmas Day, of all days in the year; and young Mr. Eastwell was snatched away by a chain-shot in the affair with the Smyrna fleet; and Mistress Salt—that was daughter of old Sir Jabez Tellworthy, and broke her father's heart—she's a widow in straitened circumstances, and living up at the old house again——"

"*What!*"

Captain Barker bounced off his chair like a dried pea from a shovel.

"There now! Your honour's chin is wounded."

"P'sh! give me your towel." He snatched it from the barber's arm, and mopped away the blood and lather from his jaw. "Mistress Salt a widow? When? How?"

"I thought, maybe, your honour would know about it."

"Don't think. Roderick Salt dead? Tell me this instant, or——"

"He was drowned, sir, in a ditch, they tell me, but two months after he sailed with his company of Foot Guards, in the spring of this year. It seems 'twas a ditch that the Marshal Turenne had the misfortune to forget about——"

"My hat—where is it? Quick!"

Already Captain Barker had plucked the napkin from his throat, caught up his sword

from a chair, and was buckling on the belt in a tremendous hurry.

"But your honour forgets the wig, which is but half curled; and your honour's face shaved on the one side only."

The hunchback's answer was to snatch his wig from between the apprentice's tongs, clap it on his head, ram his hat on the top of it, and flounce out at the shop-door.

The streets were full of folk, but he passed through them at an amazing speed. His natural gait on ship-board was a kind of anapæstic dance—two short steps and a long—and though the crowd interrupted its cadence and coerced him to a quick bobbing motion, as of a bottle in a choppy sea, it hardly affected his pace. Here and there he snapped out a greeting to some ship's captain or townsman of his acquaintance, or growled testily at a row of soldiers bearing down on him three abreast. His angry green eyes seemed to clear a path before him, in spite of the grins which his hump and shambling legs excited among strangers. In this way he darted along High Street, turned up by the markets, crossed Church Street into West Street, and passed under the great gate by which the London Road left the town.

Beyond this gate the road ran through a

tall ravelin and out upon a breezy peninsula between the river and the open sea. And here Captain Barker halted and, tugging off hat and wig, wiped his crown with a silk handkerchief.

Over the reedy marsh upon his right, where a windmill waved its lazy arms, a score of larks were singing. To his left the gulls mewed across the cliffs and the remoter sandbanks that thrust up their yellow ridges under the ebb-tide. The hum of the little town sounded drowsily behind him.

He gazed across the sandbanks upon the blue leagues of sea, and rubbed his fingers softly up and down the unshaven side of his face.

"H'm," he said, and then "p'sh!" and then "p'sh!" again; and, as if this settled it, re-adjusted his wig and hat, and set off down the road faster than ever.

A cluster of stunted poplars appeared in the distance, and a long thatched house; then, between the trees, the eye caught sight of two other buildings, exactly alike, but of a curious shape and colour. Imagine two round towers, each about forty feet in height, daubed with a bright blue wash and surmounted with a high-pitched, conical roof, of a somewhat darker tint. Above each roof a gilt vane glittered, and a flock of white pigeons circled overhead, or

alighting, dotted the tiles with patches of silver.

A bend of the road broke up this cluster of trees and buildings. The long thatched house fell upon the left of the highway, and in front of it a sign-post sprang into view, with a drinking-trough below. Directly opposite, the two blue roofs ranged themselves side by side, with long strips of garden and a thick privet hedge between them and the road. And behind, in the direction of the marsh, the poplars stretched in an irregular line.

Now the nearer of these blue pavilions was the home of Captain Barker, who for more than two years had not crossed its threshold. Yet he neither paused by its small blue gate nor glanced up the gravelled path. Nor, though thirsty, did he turn aside to the porch of the Fish and Anchor Inn; but kept along the privet hedge until he came to the second blue gate. Here he drew up, and stood for a moment with his hand on the latch.

A trim lawn stretched before him to the door of the pavilion, and here, on a rustic seat before an equally rustic table, sat a long lean gentleman, in a suit of Lincoln green faced with scarlet, and gazed into a pewter tankard. His sword lay on the turf beside him, and a cocked hat,

edged with feathers, hung on the arm of the bench.

This long gentleman looked up as the gate clicked, stretched out his legs, rose, and disappeared within the pavilion, returning after a minute with a jug of beer and a fresh tankard.

"Paid off your crew already?"

The little hunchback took a pull, answered "No" as he set down the tankard, and looked up at the weather-cock overhead.

"Wind's in the south-east."

The long man looked at the little one and pursed up his mouth. His face proclaimed him of a like age with Captain Barker. It did not at all match his figure, being short as a bulldog's; and like a bulldog he was heavily jowled. Many weathers had tanned his complexion to a rich corn-colour. His name was Jeremy Runacles, and for two years, that had ended on this very morning, he had commanded the *Trident* frigate. As he climbed down her ladder into his gig he had left on the deck behind him a reputation for possessing a shorter temper than any three officers in his Majesty's service. At present his steel-blue eyes seemed gentle enough.

"You've something to tell," he said, after a minute's silence.

The hunchback kicked at a plantain in the turf for two minutes longer, and asked—

"How's the little maid, Jemmy?"

"Grown. She's having her morning nap."

"She want's a mother."

"She'll have to do with a nurse."

"You don't want to marry again?"

"No."

"That's a lie."

Before Captain Runacles could resent this, the little man turned his back and took six paces to the party hedge and six paces back.

"I say, Jemmy, do you think we could fight?"

"Not decently."

"I was thinking that. I don't see another way out of it, though."

He kicked the plantain out of the ground, and, looking up, said very softly—"Meg's a widow."

Captain Jeremy Runacles sat down on the rustic bench. A hot flush had sprung into his face and a light leapt in his eyes; but he said nothing. Captain Barker cocked his head on one side and went on—

"Yes, you lied, Jemmy. That fellow, as I guess, ran off and left her, finding that the old man had the courage to die without coming to

reason. He went back to his regiment, sailed, and was drowned in a ditch. She's back at the old house, and in want."

"You've seen her?"

"Look here, Jemmy. You and I are a couple of tom-fools; but we try to play fair."

"Upon my soul, Jack," observed Captain Jemmy, rising to his feet again, "we can't fight. You're too good a fellow to kill."

"H'mph, I was thinking that."

As if by consent, the pair began to pace up and down the turf, one on either side of the gravelled path. At the end of three minutes Captain Jack looked up.

"After all, you've been married once, whereas I——"

"That doesn't count," the other interrupted. "I married in an unguarded moment. I was huffed with Meg——"

"No, I suppose it doesn't count."

They resumed their walk. Captain Jemmy was the next to speak.

"It seems to me Meg must decide."

"Yes, but we must start fair."

"The devil! we can't propose one in each ear. And if we race for it——"

"You must give me half a mile's start."

"But we can write."

"Yes; and deliver our letters together at the door."

"On the other hand, I've always heard that women look upon a written proposal of marriage as rather tame."

"That objection would hardly apply to two in one day."

"We'll write," said Captain Jemmy.

He went into the pavilion to search for pens and paper, while Captain Barker stepped down to the Fish and Anchor to borrow a bottle of ink.

"There must be preliminaries," the little man observed, returning and setting the ink down in the centre of the rustic table, on which already lay a bundle of old quills and some quarto sheets of yellow paper.

"As for instance?"

"*Imprimis*, a thick folio for me to sit upon. The carpenter built this table after your measure."

"I will fetch one."

"Also, more beer."

"I will draw some."

"Thirdly, a time-keeper. My stomach's empty, but it can hold out for another hour. We'll give ourselves an hour, start together and finish together."

Captain Runacles fished a silver whistle from his waistcoat pocket and blew on it shrilly. The blue and white door of the pavilion was opened, and a slight old man in a blue livery appeared on the step, and came ambling down the path. The weight of an enormous head, on the top of which his grey wig seemed to be balanced rather than fitted, bowed him as he moved. But he drew himself up to salute the two captains.

"Glad to welcome ye, Captain John, along with master here. Hey, but you've aged—the pair o' ye."

"Simeon," said his master, "draw us some beer. Aged, you say?"

"Aye — aged, aged: a trivial, remediless complaint, common to folk. Valiant deeds ye'll do yet, my masters; but, though I likes to be hopeful, the door's closin' on ye both. Ye be staid to the eye, noticeably staid. The first sign o't, to be marked at forty or so, is when a woman's blush pales before wine held to the light; the second, and that, too, ye've passed——"

"Hurry, you old fool! As it happens you've been proving us a pair of raw striplings."

"Hee-hee," tittered the old man sardonically,

and catching up the tankard trotted back to the house, with his master at his heels. Captain Barker, left alone, rearranged his neckcloth, contemplated his crooked legs for a moment with some disgust, and began to trot up and down the grass-plot, whistling the while with great energy and no regard for tune.

The pair reappeared in the doorway—Captain Runacles bearing an hour-glass and a volume of "Purchas," and Simeon the tankard, crowned with a creamy froth.

"Have you picked your quill?"

"Yes," answered the hunchback, settling himself on top of the brown folio. "No, 'tis a split one."

The pens were old, and had lain with the ink dry upon them ever since the outbreak of the Dutch War. The two men were half a minute in finding a couple that would write. Then Captain Runacles turned the hour-glass abruptly; and for an hour there was no sound in the pavilion garden but the scratching of quills, the murmur of pigeons on the roof, and the creaking of the gilded vane above them.

CHAPTER II.

THE DICE-BOX.

That same afternoon, at four o'clock, Captain Barker and Captain Runacles entered Harwich and advanced up the West Street side by side. Each had a bulky letter in his side-pocket, and the address upon each letter was the same. They talked but little.

On the right-hand side of West Street, as you enter the town, and a hundred yards or more from the town gate, there stood, at that time, a two-storeyed house of more pretensions than its fellows—from which it drew back somewhat. A line of railings, covered with ironwork of a florid and intricate pattern, but greatly decayed, shut it off from the roadway. The visitor, on opening the broad iron gate over which this pattern culminated in the figure of a Triton blowing a conch-shell, found himself in a pebbled court and before a massive front door.

Neglect hung visibly over house and court alike, as the two captains entered by the iron gate and looked around them with more trepidation than they had ever displayed in action. Grass sprouted between the pebbles, and a

greenish stain lay upon the flagstones. The drab frontage was similarly streaked; dust and rain together had set a crust upon the windows, and tufts of grass, again, flourished in the gutter-pipes beneath the eaves.

Surveying this desolation, Captain Jemmy uttered a grunt and Captain John a "p'sh!" They fumbled in their pockets, drew out their two letters, and moved to the blistered front door. A bell-pull, as rusty as the railings outside, depended by the lintel. Captain Jemmy tugged at it. It was noteworthy that whenever any effort had to be put forth, however small, the tall man stepped forward and the hunchback looked on. It was Captain Jemmy, for instance, who had, a moment before, pushed back the gate.

He had to tug thrice before a discordant bell sounded within the house, and twice again before footsteps began to shuffle along the passage.

A bolt was let down and the big door fell open, disclosing a small serving-girl, who stared upon the visitors with round eyes.

"Is your mistress within?"

"Mistress Salt is within, sirs; but——"

"But what?"

"She—she can't see you." The girl burst into tears.

"Who the devil asked her to see us?" rapped out Captain Barker.

"You are to take these two letters," interposed Captain Runacles. Each captain held out his letter. "You are to take these two—blow your nose and dry your eyes—letters to your mistress at once—mind you, *at once*—and together —*together*, you understand, and—what in thunder are you whimpering about?"

"I c-c-can't, sirs."

"Can't! Why, in the name of—don't drip on 'em, I tell you! Why, in the——"

The iron gate creaked behind them, and the two captains turned their heads. A portly, broad-shouldered gentleman, in a suit of snuff colour, came slowly across the court, with both hands behind him, and a clouded cane rapping against his heels.

"Dr. Beckerleg?"

"Hey? Why—Captain Barker, Captain Runacles! Glad to see you both—glad to see you both home again! Also, I'd be glad to know what you're both doing here, at such a time."

The captains looked at each other and coughed. They turned towards the doorway. The serving-girl had disappeared, taking their letters with her. Captain Barker faced round upon the doctor.

"You said 'at such a time,' sir."

"I did."

"And why not at this time, as well as another?"

"God bless me! Is it possible you don't know?"

"It is not only possible, but certain."

The doctor bent his head, pointed up at a window, and whispered; then went softly up the three steps into the house.

He left the two friends staring at each other. They stood and stared at each other for three minutes or more. Then Captain Barker spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"Jemmy, do you know anything about this—this kind of business?"

"Nothing. I was abroad, you know, when my own little——"

"Yes, I remember. But I thought, perhaps —I say, I can't go home till—till I've seen the doctor again."

"Nor I."

A dull moan sounded within the house.

"Oh, my God!" groaned Captain Runacles; "Meg—Meg!"

A lattice was opened softly above them and the doctor leant out.

"Go away—you two," he whispered and waved his hand towards the gate.

"But, doctor——"

"H'sh! I'll come and tell you when it's over. Where shall you be?"

"At the Three Crowns, down the street here."

"Right."

The lattice was closed again, very gently. Captain Barker laid his hand upon the tall man's sleeve.

"Jemmy, we're out of this action. I thought I knew what it meant to lay-to and have to look on while a fight went forward; but I didn't. Come——"

They passed out of the courtyard and down the street towards the Three Crowns. Beneath the sign of that inn there lounged a knot of officers, wearing the flesh-coloured facings of the Buffs, and within a young baritone voice was uplifted and trolling, to the accompaniment of clinked glasses, a song of Mr. Shirley's :—

"You virgins that did late despair
To keep your wealth from cruel men,
Tie up in silk your careless hair:
Soft peace is come again."

There was one sitting-room, but no bedroom, to be had at the Three Crowns. So they ordered up a dinner which they could not touch, but sat over in silence for two weary hours, drinking very much more burgundy than they were aware

of. Captain Jemmy, taking up three bottles one after another, and finding them all empty, ordered up three more, and drew his chair up to the hearth, where he sat kicking the oaken logs viciously with his long legs. The little hunchback stared out on the falling night, rang for candles, and began to pace the room like a caged beast.

Before midnight Captain Runacles was drunk. Six fresh bottles stood on the table. The man was a cask. Even in the warm firelight his face was pale as a sheet, and his lips worked continually.

Captain Barker still walked up and down, but his thin legs would not always move in a straight line. His eyes glared like two globes of green fire, and he began to knock against the furniture. Few men can wait helplessly and come out of it with credit. Every time Captain John hit himself against the furniture, Captain Jemmy cursed him.

"Tie up in silk your careless hair;
Soft peace is come again"

—sang the little man, in a rasping voice. "Your careless hair," he hiccoughed; "your careless hair, Meg!"

Then he sat down on the floor and laughed to himself softly, rocking his distorted body to and fro.

"Bah!" said his friend, without looking round, "you're drunk." And he poured out more burgundy. He was outrageously drunk himself, but it only affected his temper, not his wits.

"Meg," he said, "will live. What's more, she'll live to marry me."

"She won't. She'll die. Hist! there's a star falling outside."

He picked himself up and crawled upon the window-seat, clutching at the red curtains to keep his footing.

"Jemmy, she'll die. What was it that old fool said to-day? The door's closing on us both. To think of our marching up, just now, with those two letters; and the very sun in heaven cracking his cheeks with laughter at us —us two poor scarecrows making love thirty years after the time!"

His wry head dropped forward on his chest.

After this the two kept silence. The rest of the house had long since gone to rest, and the sound of muffled snoring alone marked the time as it passed, except when Captain Jemmy, catching up another oak log, drove it into the fire with his heel; or out in the street the watch went by, chanting the hour; or a tipsy shouting broke out in some distant street, or the noise of

dogs challenging each other from their kennels, across the sleeping town.

A shudder of light ran across the heavens, and over against the window Captain Barker saw the west grow pale. For some while the stars had been blotted out and light showers had fallen at intervals. Heavy clouds were banked across the river, behind Shotley; and the roofs began to glisten as they took the dawn.

Footsteps sounded on the roadway outside. He pushed open the window and looked out. Doctor Beckerleg was coming up the street, his hat pushed back and his neck-cloth loosened as he respired the morning air.

The footsteps paused underneath, by the inn door; but the little Captain leant back in the window-seat, without making a sign. He had seen the doctor's face. Before the fire Captain Jemmy brooded, with chin on breast, hands grasping the chair rail, and long legs stretched out, one on each side of the hearth. The knocking below did not rouse him from this posture, nor the creaking of feet on the stairs.

Doctor Beckerleg stood in the doorway and for a moment contemplated the scene—the empty bottles, the unsnuffed candles guttering down upon the table, and the grey faces of both

drunken men. Then he turned and whispered a word to the drawer who had hurried out of bed to admit him, and now stood behind his shoulder. The fellow shuffled downstairs.

Captain Barker struggled with a question that was dried up in his throat. Before he could get it out the doctor shook his head.

"She is dead," he announced, very gravely and simply.

The hunchback shivered. Captain Runacles neither spoke nor stirred in his chair.

"A man-child was born at two o'clock. He is alive: his mother died two hours later."

Captain Barker shivered again, plucked aimlessly at a rosette in the window-cushion, and stole a quick glance at his comrade's back. Then, putting a finger to his lip, he slid down to the floor and lurched across to the doctor.

"She was left penniless?" he whispered.

"That, or almost that, 'tis said," replied Dr. Beckerleg in the same key, though the question obviously surprised him. "Her father left his money to the town, as all know——"

"Yes, yes; I knew that. Her husband——"

"Hadn't a penny-piece, I believe: pawned her own mother's jewels and gambled 'em away; thereupon left her, as a dog his cleaned bone——"

The little man laid a hand on his collar, and, as the doctor stooped, whispered low and rapidly in his ear.

Their colloquy was interrupted.

"I'll adopt that child," said Captain Runacles from the hearth. He spoke aloud, but without turning his head.

Captain Barker hopped round, as if a pin were stuck into him.

"You—adopt Meg's boy!"

"I said that."

"But you won't."

"Pardon me; I will."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Jemmy; but I intend to adopt him myself."

"I know it. You were whispering as much to the doctor there."

"You have a little girl already."

"Precisely. That's where the difference comes in. This one, you'll note, is a boy."

"A child of your own!"

"But not of Meg's."

Captain Runacles turned in his chair as he said this, and, reaching a hand back to the table, drained the last bottle of burgundy into his glass. His face was white as a sheet and his jaw set like iron. "But not of Meg's," he repeated, lifting the glass and nodding over it at the pair.

His friend swayed into a chair, and sat facing him, his chin but just above the table and his green eyes glaring like an owl's.

"Jemmy Runacles, *I* adopt that boy."

"You're cursedly obstinate, Jack."

"Having adopted him, I shall at once quit my profession and devote the residue of my life to his education. For a year or two—that is, until he reaches an age susceptible of tuition—I shall mature a scheme of discipline, which——"

"My dear sir," the doctor interposed, "surely all this is somewhat precipitate."

"Not at all. My resolution was taken the instant you entered the room."

"That hardly seems to me to prove——"

The little man waved aside the interruption and continued—

"Tristram—for I shall have him christened by that name——"

"He'll be called Jeremiah," decided Captain Runacles, shortly.

"I've settled upon Tristram. The name is a suitable one, and signifies that its wearer is a child of sorrow."

"Jeremiah also suggests lamentations, and has the further merit of being my own name."

"Tristram——"

"Jeremiah——"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," cried Dr. Beckerleg, "would it not be as well to see the infant?"

"I can imagine," Captain Barker answered, "nothing in the infant that is likely to shake my resolution. My scheme of discipline will be based——"

"Decidedly, Jack, I shall have to run you through," said his friend, gloomily. Indeed, the doctor stood in instant fear of this catastrophe; for Captain Runacles' temper was a bye-word, and not even his customary dark flush looked so dangerous as the lustreless, sullen eyes now sunk in a face that was drawn and pinched and absolutely wax-like in colour. To the doctor's astonishment, however, it was the little hunchback who now jumped up and whipped out his sword.

"Run me through!" he almost screamed, dancing before the other, and threatening him with absurd flourishes—"Run me through!"

"Listen, gentlemen; listen, before blood is spilt! To me it appears evident that you are both drunk."

"To me that seems an advantage, since it equalises matters."

"But, whichever of you survives, he will be unable to forgive himself, having sinned not only against God, but also against logic."

"How against logic?"

"Permit me to demonstrate. Mrs. Salt, whom (as I well know) you esteemed, is lost to you; and in her place is left a babe whom—healthy though he undoubtedly is—you cannot possibly esteem without taking a great deal for granted, especially as you have not yet set eyes on him. Now it is evident that, if one of you should kill the other, a second life of approved worth will be sacrificed for an infant of purely hypothetical merits. As a man of business I condemn the transaction. As a Christian I deprecate the shedding of blood. But if somebody's blood must be shed, let us be reasonable and kill the baby."

Captain Barker lowered his point.

"Decidedly the question is more difficult than I imagined."

"At least it cannot be settled before eating," said Dr. Beckerleg, as the drawer entered with a tray. "You will forgive me that I took the liberty of ordering breakfast as soon as I looked into this room. Without asking to see your tongues, I prescribed dried herrings and home-brewed ale; for myself, a fried sole, a beef-steak reasonably underdone, a kidney-pie which the drawer commended on his own motion, with a smoked cheek of pork, perhaps——"

"You wish us to sit still while you devour all this?"

"I am willing to give each side of the argument a fair chance."

"But I find nothing to argue about," exclaimed Captain Runacles, pushing his plate from him after a very faint attempt to eat. "My mind being already made up——"

"And mine," interrupted Captain Barker.

"If I suggest that you both adopt the child," Dr. Beckerleg began.

"Still he must be educated; and our notions of education differ. Moreover, when we differ —as you may have observed—we do so with some thoroughness."

"Let me propose, then, a system of alternation, by which you could adopt the boy for six months each, turn and turn about."

"But if—as would undoubtedly happen—each adoptive parent spent his six months in undoing the other's work, it must follow that, at the end of any given period, the child's mind would be a mere *tabula rasa*. Suppose, on the other hand, we failed to wipe out each other's teaching, the unfortunate youth would be launched upon life with half his guns pointed inboard and his needle jerking from one pole to the other. Consider the name, Jeremiah Tristram."

"It is heterogeneous," admitted the doctor.

"He would be called Tristram Jeremiah," Captain Barker put in.

"Well, but that is not less heterogeneous. O wise Solomon!" cried the doctor, with his mouth full of kidney-pie; "had I but the authority you enjoyed in a like dispute, I would resign to you all the credit of originality!"

"As it is, however, you are wasting our time, and it becomes clear that we must fight, after all."

"By no means; for I have this moment received an inspiration. Drawer!"

The drawer answered this summons almost before it was uttered, by appearing in the doorway with a dish of eggs and a fresh tankard.

"Set the dish down, and attend," commanded Dr. Beckerleg. "You have a dice-box and dice in the house?"

"No, sir. His worship the Mayor——"

"My good fellow, the regulations against play in this town are well known to me; also that the Crowns is an orderly house. Let me suggest, then, that you have several gentlemen of the army lodging under this roof; that one of these, if politely asked, might own that he had come across such a thing as a dice-box during his sojourn in the Low Countries. It may even be that in the sack of some unpronounceable

town or other he has acquired a specimen, and is bringing it home in his valise to exhibit it to his family. Be so good as to inform him that three gentlemen, in Room No. 6, who are about to write a tractate on the amusements of the Dutch——"

"By your leave, sir, I don't know how it may be on campaign; but in this house we never awaken a soldier for any reason which he cannot grasp at once."

"In that case let him have his sleep out before you vex him with our apologies. But meanwhile bring the dice."

The fellow went out, whispered to the chambermaid, and returned in less than five minutes with a pair of dice and a leathern box, much worn with use.

"They belong," he whispered, "to a young gentleman of the Admiral's regiment, who was losing heavily last night."

"Thank you; they are the less likely to be loaded. You may retire for a while. My friends," the doctor continued, as soon as they were alone, "Aristotle invented Chance to account for the astonishing fact that there were certain things in the world which he could not explain. I appeal to it for as cogent a reason. Indeed, had Mistress Margaret—whose soul God has this

night resumed—had she, I say, been spared to receive and ponder the two letters which I saw you deliver at her door; and had she invited me, as a tried friend, to decide between them; I feel sure I should have ended by putting a dice-box into her hands. Do not blush. No true man need blush that he has loved such a woman: and you are both true men, if a trifle obstinate—*justi et tenaces propositi.* Men of your character, Flaccus tells us, do not blench at the thunderbolts of Jove himself; and truly, I can well imagine his missile fizzing harmlessly into your party hedge, unable to decide between the pavilion of Captain John and the pavilion of Captain Jeremy. But Chance, being witless, discriminates without trouble; and because she is blind, her arbitraments offend nobody's sensibility. Do you consent?"

The two captains looked at the dice-box and nodded.

"The conditions?"

"One throw," said Captain Runacles.

"And the highest cast to win," added Captain Barker.

"You, Captain Barker, are the senior by a year, I believe. Will you throw first?"

The little man caught up the box, rattled the dice briskly, and threw—four and three.

Captain Runacles picked them up, and made his cast deliberately—six and ace.

"Gentlemen, you must throw again. Fortune herself seems to hesitate between you."

Captain Barker threw again, and leant back with a sob of triumph.

"Two sixes, upon my soul!" murmured the doctor. "I'm afraid, Captain Jeremy——" Captain Jeremy took the dice up, turned them between finger and thumb, and dropped them slowly into the box. As he lifted his hand to make the cast he looked up and saw the gleam in his friend's greenish eyes.

The next moment box and dice flew past the hunchback's head and out at the open window.

"That's my throw," Captain Runacles announced, standing up and turning his back on the pair as he staggered across the room for his hat. But the little man also had bounced up in a fury.

"That's a vile trick! I make the best throw, and you force me to fight."

"Ah," said the other, facing slowly about and putting on his hat, "I didn't see it in that light. Very well, Jack, I decline to fight you."

"You apologise?"

"Certainly."

The little man held out a hand. "I might

have known, Jemmy, you were too good a fellow——" he began.

"Oh, stow away your pretty speeches and take back your hand. I can't prevent your playing the fool with Meg's child; but if I had a decent excuse, you may make up your mind I'd use it. As it is, the sight of you annoys me. Good-morning!"

He went out, slamming the door after him, and they heard him descend the stairs and turn down the street.

"A day's peace," mused Captain Barker, "strikes me as more expensive than a year's war. It has cost me my two dearest friends."

He strode up and down the room, muttering angrily; then looked up and said—

"Take me to Meg; I want to see her."

"And the child?"

"To be sure. I'd clean forgotten the child."

Dr. Beckerleg led the way downstairs. A pale sunshine touched the edge of the pavement across the road, and while Captain Barker was settling the bill, the doctor stepped across and picked a dice-box out of the gutter.

"Luckily, I found the dice too; they were lying close together," said he, as his companion came out. He turned the box round and appeared to be reflecting; but, next moment,

walked briskly into the bar, and returned the dice to the drawer, with a small fee.

"She is not much changed?" asked the Captain, as they moved down the street, arm in arm.

"Eh? You were saying? No, not changed. A beautiful face."

Though middle-aged and lined with trouble, it was, as Dr. Beckerleg said, a beautiful face that slept behind the dusty window above the court where the sparrows chattered. From a chamber at the back of the house the two men were met, as they climbed the stairs, by the sound of an infant's wailing. Dr. Beckerleg went towards this, after opening for the captain the door of a room wherein no sound was at all.

When, half an hour later, Captain Barker came out and closed this door gently, Dr. Beckerleg, who waited on the landing, forbore to look a second time at his face. Instead, he stared fixedly at the staircase wall and observed—

"I think it is time we turned our attention upon the child."

"Take me to him by all means."

Margaret's son was reclining, very red and angry, in the arms of an old woman who attempted vainly to soothe him by tottering up and

down the room as fast as her decrepit legs would carry her. The serving-girl, who had opened the door on the previous evening, stood beside the window, her eyes swollen with weeping.

"He is extremely small," said the Captain.

"On the contrary, he is an unusually fine boy."

"He appears to me to want something."

"He wants food."

"Bless my soul! Has none been offered to him?"

"Yes; but he refuses it."

"Extraordinary!"

"Not at all. I understand—do I not?—that you have adopted this infant."

The Captain nodded.

"Then your parental duties have already begun. You must come with me at once and choose a wet nurse."

As they passed through the hall to the front door, Captain Barker perceived two letters lying side by side upon a table there. He snatched them up hastily and crammed one into his pocket. Then, handing the other to Dr. Beckerleg—

"You might give that to Jemmy when you see him, and—look here, as soon as the child is out of the house, I think—if you went to Jemmy—he might like to see Meg, you know."

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO PAVILIONS.

Captain Barker and Captain Runacles had been friends from boyhood. They had been swished together at Dr. Huskisson's school, hard by the Water-gate; had been packed off to sea in the same ship, and afterwards had more than once smelt powder together. Admiral Blake and Sir Christopher Mings had turned them into tough fighters by sea; and Margaret Tellworthy had completed their education ashore, and made them good friends, by rejecting both. In an access of misogyny they had planned and built their blue pavilions, beside the London road, vowing to shut themselves up and look on no woman again. This happened but a short time before the first Dutch war, in which the one served under Captain Jonings in the *Ruby*, and the other had the honour to be cast ashore with Prince Rupert himself, aboard the *Galloper*. Upon the declaration of peace, in the autumn of 1667, they had returned, and, forgetting their vow, laid siege again to their mistress, who regretted the necessity of refusing them thrice apiece.

Upon his third rejection, Jeremy Runacles

was driven by indignation to offer his hand at once to Mistress Isabel Seaman, sister of that same Robert Seaman who, as Mayor of Harwich, admitted Sir Anthony Deane to the freedom of the Corporation, and had the honour to receive, in exchange, twelve fire-buckets for the new town-hall. As Mistress Isabel inherited a third of the profits amassed by her father in the rope-making trade, she was considered a good match. Captain Barker, however, resented the marriage on the ground that she was out of place in a pavilion expressly designed for a confirmed bachelor. When, after a few months, her husband also began to hold this view, Mrs. Runacles, instead of reminding him that he, and he alone, was to blame for her intrusion, did her best to make matters easy by quitting this world altogether on St. Bartholomew's Eve, 1670, leaving behind her the smallest possible daughter. But as this daughter at once required a nurse, the alleviation proved to be inconsiderable—as Mr. Runacles would have delighted to point out to his wife, had she remained within earshot. As it was, he took infinite pains to select a suitable nurse, and forthwith neglected the child entirely—a course of conduct which was not so culpable as might be supposed, since (with the sole exception of Mrs. Runacles) he had never

been known to err in choosing a subordinate. In times of peace he gave himself up to studying the mathematics, in which he was a proficient, and to the designing of such curious toys as sun-dials, water-clocks, pumps, and the like; which he so multiplied about the premises, out of pure joy in constructing them, that Simeon, his body-servant, had much ado to live among the many contrivances for making his life easier.

Although the two pavilions were exactly similar in shape and colour, their gardens differed in some important respects. On Captain Runacles' side of the hedge all was order—trim turf and yews accurately clipped, though stunted by the sea winds. Captain Barker's factotum, Narcissus Swiggs by name, was a slow man with but a single eye. His orbit in gardening was that of the four seasons, but he had the misfortune to lag behind them by the space of three months; while the two sides of the gravel path, though each would be harmonious in itself, could only be enjoyed by shutting one eye as you advanced from the blue gate to the blue front-door. The particular pride of Captain Barker's garden, however, was a collection of figure-heads set up, like statues, at regular intervals around the hedge. The like of it could be found nowhere. Here, against a background of green, and hanging

forward over a green lawn, were an Indian Chief, a Golden Hind, a Triton, a Centaur, effigies of King Charles I., another of Britannia, a third of the god Pan, and a fourth of Mr. John Phillipson, sometime alderman and shipowner of Harwich. Though rudely modelled, the majority received an extremely lifelike appearance from their colouring, which was renewed every now and then under the captain's own supervision. He asserted them to be beautiful, and his acquaintances were content with the qualification that to an unwarned visitor, in an uncertain light, they might be disconcerting.

To this paradise Captain Barker introduced his newly adopted son, with the wet-nurse that the doctor had found for him: and after explaining matters to Narcissus—who had heard of the *Wasp's* arrival in port and had been vaguely troubled by a long conversation with Simeon, next door—installed the new-comers in the two rooms under the roof of the pavilion, and sat down to meditate and wait for the child's development.

On the fourth morning after the installation, Narcissus appeared and demanded a higher wage. This was granted.

On the sixth morning, Narcissus appeared again.

"That there nurse——" he began.

"What of her?"

"As touching that there nurse, your instructions were to feed her up."

"Well?"

"I've fed her up."

"Well?"

"She's ate till she's sick."

The captain sent post-haste for Dr. Beckerleg.

"That woman's green with bile," the doctor announced. "You've been over-feeding her."

"I did it to strengthen the child."

"No doubt; but this sort of woman will eat all that's put before her. Lower her diet."

This was done. The woman recovered in a couple of days and resigned her place at once, declaring she was starved.

A second wet-nurse was sought for and found. The child thrived, was weaned, and began to cut his teeth without any trouble to mention. Twice a day Captain Barker visited his nursery and studied him attentively.

"I'll own that I'm boggled," he confessed to Dr. Beckerleg. "You see, a child is the offspring of his parents."

"That is undeniable!" the doctor answered.

"And science now asserts that he inherits his parents' aptitudes: therefore, to train him

secundum naturam, I must discover these aptitudes and educate or check them."

"Decidedly."

"Well, but his mother was an angel, and his father the dirtiest scamp that ever cheated the halter."

"I should advise you to strike a mean. What of the child himself?"

"He does nothing but eat."

"It appears to me that, striking a mean between the two extremes you mention, we arrive at mere man. I perceive a great opportunity. Suppose you teach him exactly what Adam was taught."

"Gardening?"

"Precisely. He will start with some advantage over Adam, there being no Eve to complicate matters."

"He shall be taught gardening," the little captain decided.

"The pursuit will accord well with his temperament, which is notably pacific. The child seldom or never cries. At the same time we cannot quite revert to the Garden of Eden. His life will, almost certainly, bring him more or less into contact with his fellow men."

"We must expect that."

"Therefore, as a mere measure of precaution,

it might be as well to instruct him in the use of the small-sword."

"I will look after that. There is nothing I shall enjoy more than teaching him—precaution. We have now, I think, settled everything——"

"By no means." The doctor put a hand into his tail-pocket, and, after some difficulty with the lining, pulled out a small book bound in green leather and tied with a green ribbon. "Here," he announced, "is the first volume of a treatise on education——"

"Plague take your books! You're as bad as Jemmy, yonder. I tell you I'll not addle the boy's head with books."

"But this treatise has the advantage to be unwritten."

Dr. Beckerleg untied the ribbon, and holding out the book, turned over a score of pages. They were all blank.

"Undoubtedly that is an advantage. But then, it hardly seems to me to be a treatise."

"No: but it will be when you have written it."

"I?"

"Certainly, you intend to train Tristram in accordance with nature. On what do we base our knowledge of nature? On experiment and observation. For many reasons your experiments

with the child must be limited; but you can observe him daily—hourly, if you like. In this volume you shall record your observations from day to day, *nulla dies sine lineâ*. It is the first present I make to him, as his godfather: and in doing so I set you down to write the most valuable book in the world, a complete History of a Human Creature."

Captain Barker took the volume.

"But I shall never live to finish it."

"We hope not. The beauty, however, of this history will be that at any point in its progress we may consult it for Tristram's good, and learn all that, up to that point, God has given us eyes to see. It may be that in deciding to make him a gardener we have been mistaken. That book will enlighten us."

"There's one blessing," said Captain Barker, tucking the book under his arm; "whatever pursuit the boy may follow, he'll want to follow it unmolested. And therefore, in any case, I must teach him to use the small-sword."

During the first few months, almost every entry in the captain's green volume dealt with Tristram's appetite. Nor did this fluctuate enough to make the record exciting. He was a slow, phlegmatic infant, with red cheeks and an exuberant crop of yellow curls. He slept all

night and a good third of the day, and, beyond cutting ten teeth in as many months, exhibited no precocity. Nothing troubled him, if we except an insatiable hunger. He was weaned with extreme difficulty, and, even when promoted to bread and biscuits and milk puddings, continued to recognise his nurse's past service and reward it with so sincere an affection that the woman accepted an increase of wage and cheerfully consented to stay on and take care of him.

Captain Barker saw nothing in all this to shake his first resolution of making the boy a gardener, but rather found in each successive day a reason the more for making haste to learn something about horticulture himself, in order that when the time came he might be able to teach it. At length he took counsel with Narcissus Swiggs, and unfolded his desire.

Mr. Swiggs listened sleepily, and, as soon as his master had done, gave him a month's notice.

"What the devil's the use of that?" Captain Barker asked.

"I thought you weren't satisfied, that's all."

"If I weren't, I should kick you out without half these words. You've been thinking of yourself all this while."

"I mostly does."

"Then don't, while I'm talking." And

Captain Barker explained his scheme a second time.

"No use," pronounced Mr. Swiggs at the close, shaking his head ponderously.

"Why not?"

Mr. Swiggs swept his hand before him, summing up the whole landscape with one majestic semicircle.

"Where is your soil?" he asked. "And where is your water? Springs?"—he paused a couple of seconds—"There ain't none. All that mortal man can do, I does."

"And what is that?"

"I does without."

"But the marsh behind us——"

"Salt."

"Narcissus Swiggs, you have been in my service twenty years."

"Twenty-three."

"During that time you have once or twice argued with me. I ask you, as a Christian man, to tell me truly what you got by it."

"Naught."

"Just so. On this occasion, however, I've listened with great patience to all your objections——"

"Not a tithe of 'em."

"They're all you'll have a chance of making,

at any rate. And I answer them thus: If the worst comes to the worst, I'll cover the whole of this property with a couple of tubs, one to catch rain-water and t'other filled with garden mould. If the sea rots 'em, I'll have the whole estate careened, and its bottom pitched and its seams stopped with oakum. I'll rig up a battery here, and if the water-butt runs dry you shall blaze away at the guns till you fetch the rain down, as I've seen it fetched down before now by a cannonade. But I mean to have a garden here, and a garden I'll have."

Faithful to this resolve, Captain Barker set to work to study the art in which Tristram was to be instructed, and, being by nature a hater of superficiality, determined to begin by acquainting himself with everything that had been written about the nature and habits of plants from the earliest ages to that present day. He engaged a young demy of Magdalen College, Oxford—son of Mr. Lucas, saddler, of the High Street, Harwich—who was much pinched to continue his studies at the university, to extract and translate for him whatever Aristotle, Theophrastus, and others of the Peripatetic school had written on the subject; to search the college libraries for information concerning the horticulture of China and Persia, the hanging

gardens of Babylon, those planted by the learned Abdullatif at Bagdad, and the European paradises of Naples, Florence, Monza, Mannheim, and Leyden; to draw up plans and a particular description of the Oxford Physic Garden, by Magdalen College, as well as the plantations of Worcester, Trinity, and St. John's Colleges; and to ransack the bookshops of that seat of learning for such works as might be procurable in no more difficult tongue than the Latin. In this way Captain Barker became possessed of a vast number of monkish herbals, Pliny's "Historia Naturalis," the "Herbarum Vivæ Eicones" of Brunsfels, the treatises of Tragus, Fuchsius, Matthiolus, Ebn Beithar, and Conrad Gesner, the "Stirpium Adversaria Nova" and "Plantarum seu Stirpium Historia" of Matthew Lobel, with the works of such living botanists as Henshaw, Hook, Grew, and Malpighi. As the captain had no thought of resuming a seafaring life, he felt confident of digesting in time these masses of learning, though it annoyed him at first to find himself capable of understanding but a tenth of what he read. On summer evenings he would sit out on the lawn, with a folio balanced on his knee, and do violence to Mr. Swiggs's ears with such learned terms as "Boraginiæ," "Cucurbitaceæ," "Leguminosæ,"

and as winter drew in, master and man would hold long consultations indoors over certain plants, the portraits of which in the herbals seemed familiar enough, though their habitats often proved, on further reading, to lie no nearer than Arabia Felix or the Spice Islands. Nevertheless, they took some practical steps. To begin with, the soil of the garden before the Blue Pavilion was entirely changed—Captain Barker importing from The Hague no less than thirty tons of the mould most approved by the Dutch tulip-growers. A tank, too, was sunk at the back of the building, towards the marsh, as a receptacle and reservoir for rain-water; and by Tristram's fourth birthday his adoptive father began to build, on the south side of the house, a hibernatory, or greenhouse, differing in size only from that which Solomon de Caus had the honour to erect for the Elector Palatine in his gardens at Heidelberg.

Meanwhile Captain Runacles, who watched these operations from the other side of the privet hedge and picked up many scraps of rumour from the antique Simeon, was consumed with scorn and envy. The two friends no longer spoke. At the back of the Fish and Anchor, across the road, there stretched at this time the

largest and fairest bowling-green in the east of England—two good acres of smooth turf, stretching almost to the edge of the sea-cliff, on which side the wall was cut down to within a foot of the ground, so that the gossips as they played, or sat and smoked on the benches about the green, might have a clear view of the ships entering or leaving the harbour, or of others that, hull-down on the horizon, took the sunset on their sails. Hither it had always been the custom of the two captains to repair at the closing in of the day, and drink their beer together as they watched this or that vessel more or less narrowly avoiding the shoals below. Nor would they commonly retire, unless the weather was dirty, until the sea-coal fire was lit above the town-gate, and the lesser lighthouse upon the town green answered with its six candles. Now, however, though they met here as usual, no salutation was exchanged. On benches as far apart as possible they drank their beer in silence and watched the players. The situation was understood by everybody at the inn; and at first some awkward attempts were made to heal the breach. But Captain Jeremy's scowl and the light in Captain John's green eyes soon convinced the busybodies that they were playing with fire, and likely to burn their fingers.

In his home, Captain Runacles grew restless. To cure this, he set to work and finished a large dial which he had long intended to present to the Corporation of Harwich, to set up over the town-gate. The Corporation accepted the gift, and employed their clerk to write a letter of thanks. The language of this letter was so flattering that Captain Runacles made another dial for the Exchange. Being thanked for this also, he presented an excellent pendulum clock of his own making, to be placed over his Majesty's arms upon the principal gate of the dockyard; with a bell above the clock to strike the hours of the day, as well as to summon the men to their work; and two more dials, the one for the new town-hall, the other for the almshouses near St. Helen's Port. Again the Corporation thanked him as profusely as before, but asked him to be at the expense of affixing these dials, which, both by their beauty and number, were rapidly making Harwich unique among towns of its size. Upon this, Captain Runacles, in a huff, forswore all further munificence, and applied himself to the construction of a pair of compasses capable of dividing an inch into a thousand parts, and to the sinking of a well in the marsh behind his pavilion. The design of this well was extremely ingenious. It was worked by means

of a wheel, nine feet in diameter, with steps in its circumference like those of a treadmill, and so weighted that by walking upon it, as if up a flight of stairs, a person of eleven or twelve stone would draw up a bucket—two buckets being so hung, at the ends of a rope surrounding the wheel, that while one ascended, full of water, the other, which was empty, sank down and was refilled. These buckets being too heavy for a man to overturn to pour out the water, he bored a hole in each, and contrived to plug the holes so that the weight of the bucket as it bumped upon the trough prepared for it at the well's edge jogged out the plug and sent the water running down the trough into whatever pail or vessel stood ready to catch it. Nor is it astonishing that he lost his temper when, after these preparations, he found the well was not deep enough, and the water as much infected with brine as if he had gathered it from the surface of the marsh.

It was on the day following this disappointment that, while walking to and fro the length of his turfed garden, between three and four in the afternoon (for his habits were methodical), he heard a child's voice lifted on the far side of the party hedge—

"Dad!"

"Eh? What is it?" answered the voice of Captain Barker, from his new tulip-bed, across the garden.

"What thing is this?"

"A nymph." Captain Runacles guessed by this that the four-year-old's question had reference to one of the figure-heads disposed along the hedge.

"What is a nymph?"

"A sort of girl."

"I don't like this sort of girl. She's got no legs."

"Come over here and look at this tulip."

"There's a much better sort of girl next door," Tristram continued, unheeding.

"What do you know about her?" sharply inquired his guardian.

"Oh, I see her often at the top window, and sometimes out walking. Nurse says we're not to speak, so we put out our tongues at each other."

"Tristram, come over here and look——"

"She's got funny curls, and puts her doll to bed in the window-seat every night. I like that sort of girl. When I grow up," the young bashaw proceeded, "I shall have lots of that sort of girl all over the garden, instead of these wooden things."

Captain Barker treated this Oriental day-dream with silence.

"Dad—why am I worth more than all the girls in the world?"

"Who said you were?"

"Nurse. She says you think so. She says the big man next door would give his eyes to have a boy like me; but he can't make nothing of a girl, and don't try. Narcissus——"

"Hallo!" replied the heavy voice of Mr. Swiggs.

"Have you got a boy?"

"No, sir: 'nmarried."

"What did you give your eye for, then?"

"Losh!" ejaculated Narcissus, as Captain Barker pounced on the youngster and haled him off to the tulip-bed. The interrogatory was stayed for a while.

Captain Runacles, who had caught every word, strode half a dozen times up and down his grass-plot: then summoned Simeon.

"Tell nurse to send Miss Sophia down to me."

Five minutes later a small child of seven appeared in the doorway, and, after hesitating there for a moment, stepped timidly across the turf. Her figure and movements were ungainly, and her complexion appeared unnaturally sallow against a dark grey frock. A wet brush, applied

two minutes before with inconsiderate zeal, had taken all the curl out of her dark hair and smoothed it in preposterous bands on either side of her brow. Her arms hung stiff and perpendicular, and she fidgeted with her short skirt as she advanced.

Captain Runacles stopped short in his walk and surveyed her.

"H'm," he said. "Don't shuffle."

The little girl looked up, dropped her eyes again quickly, and let her hands hang limp beside her. She was shaking from head to foot.

"You are a girl."

"Pardon, father," she mumbled in a low whisper.

"Next door there lives a small boy. You are in the habit of putting out your tongue at him. Why?"

"I—I——"

Her voice wavered and she broke into a fit of sobbing.

"Tut, tut! Stop that noise; I haven't scolded you. On the contrary, I sent for you in the hope that you might always be able to put out your tongue at that boy. Sophia, dry your eyes and attend, please. Would you like to be an accomplished woman?"

"If it please you, father."

"Now may the devil fly away with the whole sex! If they *do* happen to desire anything good in itself, it's always to please some man or another. Sophia, I ask you if, for your own sake, and for the sake of knowledge, you will be my pupil; if you care to pursue——" Captain Runacles checked himself, not because he had any idea that he was talking over the head of a girl of seven, but because a general proposition had occurred to him.

"Woman's notion of a pursuit," he said, clasping his hands behind him and regarding his daughter's tear-stained face with severity—"woman's notion of a pursuit is entirely passive. Her only idea is to be pursued, and, even so, her mind runs on ultimate capture. Sophia," he continued, himself forgetting for the moment his view of knowledge as *sui causâ optandum*, "would you like to please me by licking that boy across the hedge into a cocked hat?"

"But—oh, father!"

"What is it?"

She could not answer for a moment. Nor did he know that she besought God every night to change her into a boy that she might find some grace in his sight.

"You have one advantage," said her father coldly, as she struggled to keep down her tears.

Your rival across the hedge is in a fair way to be turned into a fool. We will begin to-morrow. In a week or so I shall be able to pronounce some opinion on your capacity. Now run indoors to your nurse—why, bless my soul!"

The child had trotted forward, and, taking his hand, kissed it passionately. He looked into her face, and, finding it white as a sheet, lifted her in his arms and carried her into the pavilion.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO PAVILIONS (*continued*).

"We must have an apiarium," Captain Barker announced, a week later.

"What's that?" Mr. Swiggs asked.

"Half-a-dozen beehives, at least."

"No room."

"There is nothing," pursued Captain Barker, "that gives such character to a garden as an apiarium, unless it be fishponds. I will have both."

"No water."

The fishponds shall be constantly supplied with running water. I will have three ponds at different levels, connected with miniature waterfalls, and approached by an *allée verte*. The glimpse of water between green hedges will be extremely refreshing to the eye. The apiarium shall stand close to these ponds—as Virgil commends—

> At liquidi fontes et stagna virentia musco
> Adsint, et tenuis fugiens per gramina rivus *

—and shall be surrounded with beds of violets

* Let welling springs and spongy moss be nigh,
And through the grass a streamlet fleeting by.

and lavender, and such blue flowers as bees especially love. When, Narcissus, I glance over the hedge at the back of the house and behold Captain Runacles' two acres lying waste, cumbered like a mining country with the ruins of his mechanical toys, I have a mind to——"

"He'll neither sell nor lend."

"I perceive that in time we must set about draining so much of the marsh outside as belongs to me. There, if anywhere, the fish-ponds must lie. In the meantime there is a full rood of ground beyond the northern hedge that we may consider. By cutting a path through the privet there, and enclosing this parcel, we gain for our bees a quadrangle which will not only give them their proper seclusion, but may be planted in the classical style without detriment to the general effect of our garden. The privet serving as a screen. . . ."

Invigorated by Mr. Swiggs's opposition, the little man continued for twenty minutes to revel in details, and ended by rushing his companion off to examine the ground. In his hot fit he forgot all about Tristram, who, tired of listening, had slipped away among the gooseberry-bushes, with a half-eaten slice of bread and butter in his hand.

The fruit proved green and hard—for it was

now the third week of May—and by the time his bread and butter was eaten the boy had a fancy to explore further. He wandered through the strawberry-beds, and, finding nothing there but disappointment, allowed himself to run lazily after a white butterfly, which led him down to the front of the pavilion, over the parterres of budding tulips, and across to an east border gay with heart's-ease, bachelor's buttons, forget-me-nots, and purple honesty. The scent of budding yews met him here, blown softly across from Captain Runacles' garden. The white butterfly balanced himself on this odorous breeze, and, rising against it, skimmed suddenly over the hedge and dropped out of sight.

Now there was set, under an archway in this hedge, a blue door, the chinks of which were veiled with cobwebs and the panels streaked with the silvery tracks of snails. By this *pervius usus* (as Captain Runacles called it) the two friends had been used to visit each other, but since the quarrel it had never been opened. No lock had been fixed upon it, however. Only the passions of two obstinate men had kept it shut for four years and more.

The child contemplated this door for a minute, then lifted himself on tiptoe, and

stretched his hand up towards the rusty latch. It was a good six inches above his reach.

He glanced back over his shoulder. Nobody was in sight. His eyes fell on a stack of flower-pots left by Narcissus beside the path. He fetched one, set it upside-down in front of the door, and climbed atop of it.

This time he reached the latch, and lifted it with some difficulty. His weight pressed the door open and he fell forward, sprawling on hands and knees, into the next garden.

He picked himself up, and was on the point of fetching a prolonged howl, but suddenly thought better of it, and began to stare instead.

Barely six paces in front of him, and in the centre of a round garden-bed, a small girl was kneeling. She held a rusty table-knife, the blade of which was covered with mould; and as she gazed back at him the boy saw that her face was stained with weeping.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!"

"I was just thinking of you, little boy, and beginning to despise you, when plump—in you tumbled."

"But, I say—look here, you know—I've been told what despising is, and if you despise me you ought to say why."

"Because I've been ordered to. I'm going to do it out of this book here. Listen: 'A point is that which has no parts and no magnitude,' and that's only the beginning. Oh, my dear, I'll wither you up—you just wait a bit."

She dug the knife viciously into the earth.

"I don't care," said Tristram, affably.

"P'r'aps you don't know what 'Don't Care' came to?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, he came to—a place. It was a good deal deeper down than this hole I'm digging."

"What's the hole for?"

"My doll, here. I've got to put away childish things; so I'm going to cover her right up and never see her face again. Oh! oh!"

She began to sob as if her heart would break.

"I wouldn't cry if I were you. I didn't cry just now when I tumbled off the flower-pot."

"You don't know what it is to be a mother."

"No, but I can dig ever so much better than you. Look here. I've got a spade of my own, and I'll show you how to dig properly, if you like."

He ran off and returned with it in less than a minute. In another minute they were engrossed in the burial rites, the girl still playing at tragedy, but enjoying herself immensely.

"We must read something over the remains," she announced.

"Why?"

"Because it's always done, unless the dead person is buried with a stake through his inside."

"Then we'd better take her out again and put a stake through her; because I can't read."

"Haven't you begun to learn yet?"

"No."

"Well," said Sophia, picking up the Euclid, "you can hold a corner of the book and listen to what I read, and perhaps you can repeat some of it after me, you contemptible boy."

They were standing over the doll's grave, side by side, and chanting in antiphon the fourth proposition of the First Book of Euclid, when Captain Runacles came round the corner of the house, and halted to rub his eyes.

At the sound of his footstep on the gravel Sophia snatched the book from Tristram and looked desparately round. It was too late. Her father was glaring down upon them both, with his hands behind him and his chin stuck forward.

"You miserable child!

He pronounced it deliberately, syllable by syllable, and turned upon Tristram.

"Will you kindly explain, sir, to what I owe the honour of your presence in my garden?"

Tristram, who had never before been addressed with harshness, failed to understand the tone of this speech, and answered with amiable directness—

"I tumbled in, off a flower-pot."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and I stayed because I liked the girl here."

"You do her infinite honour."

"I'm going away now because I'm hungry. But I'll come back again after dinner, all right."

"No," said Captain Runacles, grimly; "on that point you must allow me to correct you. You infernal young cub, if I catch you here again——"

"Hi! Captain!" interrupted a voice at the foot of the garden.

Doctor Beckerleg stood beside the blue gate and held it open to admit another visitor, whose dress and appearance were unfamiliar to the Captain. He paused midway in his threat, and removed his eyes from the children. Sophia crept towards the house, while Tristram seized his opportunity and slipped away to the safe side of the privet-hedge.

"Let me present," said the doctor, "Mr. Josias Finch, of Boston, New England."

"Attorney-at-law," Mr. Finch added, lifting his hat politely.

He was a little man with a triple chin, and small, intelligent eyes that twinkled deep in a round, fat face. His dress was of a slate-coloured material, decorated with silver buttons, and he wore a voluminous wig.

"With news for you, Captain."

"Important news," Mr. Finch echoed. He pulled out a silver snuff-box and offered it to Captain Runacles. "You don't indulge? But you will suffer me, no doubt. Ah," he went on, inhaling a pinch, "it has been a long journey, sir, and my stomach abhors sea-voyaging."

"Shall we step into the house?" suggested Captain Runacles.

"By all means, sir. My business is simple, but may require some elucidation. May I suggest that Dr. Beckerleg accompanies us? He is already acquainted with the drift of my commission, for reasons I will expound hereafter."

"Of course. Come in, doctor." He led the pair into his dining-room. "I may as well state, Mr. Finch, that my temper is somewhat impatient. If you come as a friend, my

hospitality is yours for as long as you care to use it; but I'd take it kindly if you came to the heart of your business at once."

"To be sure, sir, and a very proper attitude. I plunge, then, into the middle of affairs. You will doubtless remember Silvanus Tellworthy, younger brother of the late Sir Jabez Tellworthy whose virtues recently ceased to adorn this neighbourhood."

"Perfectly."

"His conscience led him to exchange this country, in the thirty-fifth year of his age, for a soil more amical to his religious opinions."

"I have heard 'twas for fear of the attentions of a widow in Harwich; but proceed."

"After amassing a considerable fortune he died, sir, of a paralytical stroke, upon the 12th of November last."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"That was the common expression of Boston at the time. Dismissing for a more leisurely occasion the consideration of his civic virtues, I may say that I had the honour to possess his confidence in the double capacity of friend and legal adviser. It fell to me to draw up his will, some few years before his decease; and now I am left to the task of giving it effect. He was a childless man, and, with the exception of some

trifling legacies to the town of Boston and a few private friends, bequeathed his wealth to his only niece, Margaret, daughter of the Sir Jabez Tellworthy already mentioned, and her heirs."

Captain Runacles uncrossed his legs and addressed Dr. Beckerleg.

"Doctor, haven't you brought this gentleman to the wrong pavilion?"

"Wait a moment."

"I should rather say," Mr. Finch continued, "that a life interest only was bestowed upon Margaret Salt, the bulk of the estate going to the anticipated heirs of her body, and being (also by anticipation) apportioned among them on a principle of division which need not occupy our attention, for (as it turns out) she has left but one child. My client made this will soon after receiving the news of his niece's marriage with Captain Roderick Salt, and before he had any reason to suspect that gentleman's real character. It was, therefore, natural that in selecting a couple of trustees he regarded the Captain as the man who, of all others, might be reckoned on to look after the interests of the child or children. When, however, the unamiable qualities of Captain Salt reached his ear, he would, doubtless, have made some alteration in the will, but for the tidings of that officer's death in the Low

Countries. He had such confidence in the surviving trustee——"

"Man alive!" Captain Runacles broke in, "if you are talking of yourself, let me advise you to quit England by the first ship that sails. The child is already furnished with a guardian—a guardian, my dear sir, who will nullify your legal claim upon the child by the simple expedient of taking your life."

"But, excuse me——"

"You will waive your claim, of course. But let me advise you also to conceal it; for Captain Barker is quite capable, should he get hold of this will, of regarding your mere existence as an insult."

"But, dear me—if you'll allow me to speak —I am not talking of myself."

"No?"

"No; I am not the child's legal guardian."

"I congratulate you. But who is it, then?"

"It is you, Captain Runacles."

"What!" The Captain leapt up and glared at Mr. Finch incredulously.

"Here is a copy of the will; read for yourself. My friend, Silvanus Tellworthy, remembered you as a friend of his early days and as a man of probity. He had heard also, from time to time, news of your public actions that increased

his esteem. He was informed—pardon me if I mention it—of your sincere and honourable affection for his niece; and, indeed, hoped, I may say—— "

"No more on that point, if you please."

"Sir, I am silent, and ask your pardon."

"But—but—doctor, this is simply astounding. Do you hear what this gentleman says? —that I—I alone—am Tristram's guardian after all?"

Mr. Finch and Dr. Beckerleg exchanged an anxious look. The doctor cleared his throat and took up the story.

"No, my dear Captain, I regret that you make one mistake. You said 'alone.'"

"What? Is there another trustee?"

"There is the man already mentioned—Roderick Salt."

"Tut, tut—he's dead."

"I fear, on the contrary, that he's alive."

"But he was drowned, confound him!"

"Some meddling Netherlander, cursed with too much humanity, must have baulked the will of heaven by dragging him out of the ditch and reviving him He was rescued, sir, and clapped into prison; escaped by turning traitor and entering the service of the Prince of Orange—in what capacity I dare not say, but, likely

enough as a spy, or perhaps a kidnapper of soldiers. There are plenty of the trade along the frontiers just now. He has changed his name, but has been recognised by more than one Harwich man at the Hague, and again at Cuxhaven. For a year, now, I have heard nothing of him. Belike he is off upon a dirty mission to some German principality no bigger than your back garden; ambassadors of his size are as easy to find on the Continent of Europe as a needle in a bottle of hay. Or, may-be, he wanders on some gaming campaign of his own—— "

The face of Captain Runacles, as the doctor proceeded, went through three rapid changes of colour—white, scarlet, and purple.

"You knew all this?" he shouted, the congested veins standing out upon his temples; "you knew all this, and kept us in the dark?"

"I did. It affected the child in no way. The fellow clearly knew nothing, or cared nothing, about Tristram. Even supposing—which was absurd—that he would wish to burden himself with the boy, I felt pretty sure of Barker's ability to cope with him, at the briefest notice. Moreover, considering his mode of life, I hoped by waiting a very short while to be able to tell you that Captain Salt's career was ended

by the halter. You see, he was evidently not born to be drowned, and I drew the usual inference. But Mr. Finch's news puts a very different complexion on the business. Tristram being heir, as I understand, to some fifteen hundred pounds per annum——"

"Mr. Finch," said the Captain, calmly, stepping to the door and locking it, "have you, by any chance, the intention of seeking out my co-trustee?"

"H'm: I am bound, sir, to consider my duty as a professional man."

"Let me entreat you also to reconsider it."

The little attorney glanced over his shoulder at the closed door.

"Sir," he replied with dignity, "I perceive that I have been unfortunate enough to give you a wrong notion of my character. Let me say that, in interpreting my duty, I am even less likely to be coerced by threats than by the strict letter of the law. I will not be dragooned. And I decide nothing until you have opened that door."

"And that's mighty well said," commented Dr. Beckerleg.

Captain Jemmy slipped back the bolt.

"I shall nevertheless hold you to account," he growled.

"Thank you; I am accustomed to responsibility. And now let me say that as the child seems to be in good hands——"

"On the contrary, he's in outrageously bad ones."

"——or rather, in the hands of an upright and kindly gentleman, I think we may, perhaps, agree that these rumours about Captain Salt are —shall we say?—too good to be true. May I ask Dr. Beckerleg here if he believes in ghosts?"

"Firmly," answered the doctor, hiding a smile.

"I have known occasions," the attorney went on, with a serious face, "when a cautious belief in ghosts has proved of the very highest service in dealing with apparently intractable problems. Or suppose we call it an hypothesis, liable to correction——"

"That's it," assented the Captain heartily. "I can believe Roderick Salt to be a ghost until he comes to me and proves that he is not."

"Decidedly."

"And then I'll make him one."

The corners of Mr. Finch's mouth twitched perceptibly.

"Gently, dear sir; remember, please, that I am only concerned with the immediate situation. To-morrow I start again for Bristol, leaving the

future to be dealt with as your prudence may direct. But I have no doubt," he added with a bow, "that you will act, in all contingencies, with a single eye to the child's welfare. It is understood, then, that the child, Tristram Salt, remains under the care of Captain Barker, your friend, and his adoptive father——"

"Not at all."

"I think so," said Dr. Beckerleg, quietly, looking straight into the captain's eyes.

"That's for me to decide, doctor."

"Tut-tut! it was decided the moment you were born."

"I think," Mr. Finch interposed, "it is time I gave Captain Runacles some necessary information about the boy's inheritance."

It was close upon four o'clock when the little blue door which, until that morning, had remained shut for over four years was opened a second time, and Captain Runacles stepped through into Captain Barker's domain. His wig was carefully brushed, and he carried a gold-headed cane. Whatever emotion he may have felt was concealed by the upright carriage and solemn pace proper to a visit of state.

Captain Barker, who stood at the lower end of the garden, and stooped over his beloved tulips, started at the sound of footsteps, looked

round, and, hastily plucking his wig from the handle of a spade that stood upright in the mould by his elbow, arranged it upon his bald scalp and awaited the other's advance.

The pair did not shake hands.

"I have come to speak with you about—er—Tristram." The name stuck in Captain Jeremy's throat.

"The boy strayed into your premises to-day. I know it. If you are aggrieved by such a trifle——"

"I am not. If you doubt the sufficiency of my excuse for calling upon you, let me say at once that I come as the boy's guardian."

"Upon my word——"

"As his legal guardian."

"Bah! This is too much! Do you conceive yourself to be jesting?"

"Have you ever known me to jest?

"Not wilfully."

"Not, at any rate, upon parchment. Be so good as to run your eye over this."

The little man took the copy of Silvanus Tellworthy's will and fumbled it between his fingers.

"Is this some dirty trick of lawyer's work?"

"It is."

"Do you really wish me to read it?"

"Unless you prefer me to explain."

"I do—vastly."

"Very well, then."

And Captain Runacles proceeded to explain the will in a hard, methodical voice, nodding his head whenever he reached a point of importance at the parchment which rustled between Captain Barker's fingers. For a while this rustle sounded like the whisper of a gathering storm.

"It follows from this," concluded Captain Runacles, "that I am responsible for the child's upbringing. Can you carry the reasoning a step further?"

The little man looked up. The wrath had clean died out of his puckered face; and in place of it there showed a blank despair, mingled with loathing and unspeakable bitterness of soul.

"Yes, I can," he replied very slowly, and turning away his face leant a hand on the spade beside him. "Oh, Jemmy, Jemmy!" he muttered.

There was no entreaty in the words, but they pierced Captain Jemmy's heart like two stabs of a knife. He took a step forward, and stretched out a hand as if to lay it on his old friend's shoulder. The little man jumped aside, faced him again, hissing out one word—

"*You!*"

The arm dropped.

"Jack—I'm sorry; but you have drawn the wrong conclusion."

The pair looked each other in the face for a moment, and Captain Runacles went on, but more coldly, and as if repeating a task—

"Yes, the wrong conclusion. For my own part, as you once pointed out, I have a girl. I may add that I propose to train up Sophia; and I haven't the faintest doubt that, in spite of her sex, I can train her to knock your Tristram into a cocked hat in every department of useful knowledge. At the same time it has occurred to me that, as his guardian, I am at least bound to give the boy every chance. You are teaching him gardening?"

"Captain Barker nodded, with a face profoundly puzzled.

"You object to it?" he asked.

"Decidedly, under your present conditions. You are cramped for space."

"We are using every inch between the road and the marsh."

"You forget my back-garden, which lies waste at present."

"My dear Jemmy!"

"By knocking a hole in the party hedge you

gain two and a-half acres at least. Then, as to water—you depend on the rain-fall."

"That's true."

"But there's an excellent spring between this and Dovercourt; and the owner will sell."

"It's half a mile away."

"God bless my soul! I suppose I am not too old to design a conduit."

Captain Jack's arm stole into Captain Jemmy's.

"You'll be saying next," the latter went on, "that I'm too old to set about draining the marsh. Then, as to sun-dials: you're amazingly deficient in sun-dials. Now half-a-dozen here and there—and a fish-pond or two—unless you'd like to have a moat. I could run you a moat around the back, and keep it supplied with fresh water all the year round. By the way, talking of moats and fresh water, did I tell you that Roderick Salt was not drowned, after all?"

"Eh? How did he die, then?"

"He's not dead."

"Good God!"

"He has been seen at the Hague, and again at Cuxhaven, by men of this very port. Beckerleg will give you their names."

"But you tell me—the will, here, says—that he's joint guardian——"

"Yes; it's serious, if he finds out. Mr. Finch—I may say I've a large respect for that attorney—Mr. Finch suggests that it may have been his ghost. I think, Jack, we must take that explanation."

"Rubbish!"

"Ghosts have some useful properties."

"Name one or two."

"Well, to start with, they can be disbelieved in until seen."

"I begin to see."

"Then, again, should one appear, he can be believed in, and walked through. This is a rule without exceptions. If you have reason to believe that a ghost stands before you, your first step would be to make a hole in him to convince yourself."

"But if one should be mistaken?"

"If the apparition gives up the ghost, so to speak, and you find yourself mistaken, I see no harm in owning it. As co-trustee of aggrieved man, I will at any time listen to your apologies. By-the-bye, I have asked Mr. Finch to call upon you to-morrow and explain his theory, among other matters of business. You will understand that I bear no affection towards this boy of yours: on the contrary, I sincerely desire my Sophia to shame him with her attainments. It

is a mere matter of my duty towards him; and I'll be obliged if you keep him, as far as possible, out of my sight. Now about those dials——"

Captain Barker understood, but replied only by tightening for a moment the hand that rested on his comrade's sleeve. The old friends moved on beside the flower-borders and fell into trivial converse to hide a joy as deep as that of sweethearts who have quarrelled and now are reconciled.

CHAPTER V.

A SWARM OF BEES.

The green volumes in which, for the next thirteen years, Captain Barker kept accurate chronicle of Tristram's progress, and of every fact, however trivial, that seemed to illustrate it, have since been lost to the world, as our story will show. There were thirty-seven of these volumes; and as soon as one was filled Dr. Beckerleg presented another. It is our duty to take up the tale on the 1st of May, 1691—the very day upon which misfortune stopped Captain Barker's pen and (as it turned out) closed his *magnum opus* for ever.

Let us record only that during these thirteen years Tristram added so much to his stature as to astonish his friends whenever they looked at him; and that he took little interest in the affairs of the world beyond the privet hedge—affairs which just then were extremely unsettled, and disturbed the sleep and appetite of a vast number of people. To begin with, King Charles had died without doing his faithful subjects the honour of explaining whether he did so as a Protestant or a Papist, an uncertainty which

caused them endless trouble. The religion of his brother and successor, though quite unambiguous, put them to no less vexation by being incurably wrong; and after four years of heated controversy they felt justified in flocking, more in sorrow than in anger, round the standard of William, Prince of Orange, who agreed with them on first principles, and had sailed into Torbay before an exceedingly prosperous breeze. King James having escaped to Saint Germains, King William reigned in his stead, to the welfare of his people and the disgust of Captain Barker and Captain Runacles, who, from habit, were unable to regard a Dutchman otherwise than as an enemy to be knocked on the head. Moreover, they retained a warm respect for the seamanship of their ejected Sovereign, under whom they had frequently served, when, as Duke of York, he had commanded the British Fleet.

Now, shortly after daybreak upon May morning, 1691—which fell on a Friday—his Majesty King William the Third set out from Kensington for Harwich, where a squadron of five-and-twenty sail, under command of Rear-Admiral Rooke, lay waiting to escort him to the Hague, there to open the summer campaign against King Lewis of France. This expedition raised his Majesty's spirits for more than one reason.

Not only would it take him for some months out of a country he detested, and back to his beloved Holland—the very flatness of which was inexpressibly dear to his recollection, though he had left it but a month or two—but the prospect of this year's campaign had awakened quite an extraordinary enthusiasm in England. For the first time since Henry the Eighth had laid siege to Boulogne, an English army commanded by an English king was about to exhibit its prowess on Continental soil. It became the rage among the young gentlemen of St. James's and Whitehall to volunteer for service in Flanders. The coffee-houses were threatened with desertion, and a prodigious number of banquets had been held by way of farewell. The regiments which marched into Harwich on the last day of April to await the King were swollen with recruits eager for glory. Addresses of duty and loyalty met his Majesty at every halting-place, and acclamations followed the royal coach throughout the route. The townsfolk of Harwich, in particular, had hung out every scrap of bunting they could find, besides erecting half-a-dozen triumphal arches, which by their taste and magnificence were calculated to leave the most favourable impression in the Sovereign's mind.

The first of these arches, bearing the

inscription, *God Save King William, Defender of our Faith and Liberty*, was erected on the London road, a dozen paces beyond the Fish and Anchor Inn, Captain Barker having refused the landlord —who desired to build the arch right in front of his inn-door—permission to set up any pole or support against the privet-hedge. In fact, he and Captain Runacles had sworn very heartily to sit indoors, pull down their blinds, and withhold their countenances from the usurper.

Nature, however, which regards neither the majesty of Kings nor the indignation of their subjects, made frustrate this unamiable design.

At twenty minutes past four that afternoon, a hive-full of Captain Barker's bees took it into their heads to swarm.

It was a warm afternoon, and the little man sat in his library composing a letter to Mr. John Ray, of Cambridge University, whose forthcoming "Historia Plantarum" he believed himself to be enriching with one or two suggestions on hibernation. Narcissus Swiggs was down at the Fish and Anchor, drinking King William's health. Tristram, who was supposed to be at work clipping the privet-hedge around the apiarium, was engaged in the summer-house, at the far end of it, upon business of his own.

This business—the nature of which shall be

explained hereafter—completely engrossed him. Nor did he even hear the restless hum of the bees at the mouth of the hive, ten paces away, nor the noisy bustle of the drones. It was only when the swarm poured out upon the air with a whir of wings, and, darkening for an instant the sunny doorway of the summer-house, sailed over the yew hedge towards the road, that Tristram leapt to his feet and ran at full speed towards the pavilion.

"The bees have swarmed!" he called out, thrusting his head in at the library window.

Captain Barker dropped his pen, bounced up, and came rushing out by the front door.

"Where?"

"Down towards the road."

Years had not tamed the little hunchback's agility. Without troubling to fetch hat or wig, he raced down the garden path, and had almost reached the gate before Tristram caught him up.

"Up or down did they go?" he asked, standing in the middle of the road, uncertain in which direction to run.

"Across, most likely; but higher up than this, by the line they took," Tristram answered, pointing in the direction of the town. "Hullo!"

"What is it?"

"Why, look: there—under the arch!"

Beneath the very centre of the triumphal arch, and directly under the sacred name of King William, there hung a black object larger than a man's head, and in shape resembling a bunch of grapes. It was the swarm, and a very fine one, numbering—as Captain Barker estimated—twenty thousand workers at the very least. He ran under the arch, and nearly cricked his neck staring up at them.

His excited motions had been seen by a small knot of waggoners and farm-hands, who were drinking and gossiping on the benches before the Fish and Anchor, to wile away the time of waiting for the King's arrival. At first they thought the royal cavalcade must be in sight, though not expected for an hour or more; and hurried up in twos and threes.

"What's the to-do, Captain?"

"Where's that lumbering fool Narcissus?" demanded Captain Barker, stamping his foot and pointing to the cluster over his head.

Mr. Swiggs came forward, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He had been the last to arrive, having lingered a minute to attend to the half-emptied mugs of his more impatient fellows.

"Here," he announced.

"Fetch a ladder, and bring one of the new

hives—the one I rubbed with elder-buds the day before yesterday. Tristram, run to the house for my gloves and a board. Quick, I say —here, somebody kick that one-eyed dawdler! What the plague? Haven't there been kings enough in England these last fifty years that you waste a good afternoon on the look-out for the newest?"

"You'll be careful of my arch, Captain?" the landlord hazarded nervously. His Majesty'll be coming along presently——"

"I'll be careful of my bees. D'ye want me to leave them there till he passes, and may-be to lose the half of my swarm down the nape of his royal neck? I can't help their wearing the orange: they were born o' that colour, which is more than you can say, landlord, or any man Jack here present. But I can prevent their swarming and buzzing in his Majesty's path like any crowd of turncoats. Ah, here comes Tristram with the ladder. Set it here, my boy. Take care—don't run a hole through *King William*—leave that to his new friends. So—now pull on the gloves and step up, while I come after with the hive."

Tristram, having fixed the ladder firmly, a little to the right of the swarm, began to ascend. Captain Barker, giving orders to Narcissus to

stand by with the flat board, took the empty hive, and holding it balanced, upside-down, in the hollow of his palm, was preparing to follow on Tristram's heels, when an interruption occurred.

Round the corner of the road from Harwich town came a red-coated captain, riding on a grey charger, and behind him a company of foot marching eight abreast, with a sergeant beside them.

"Hullo!" cried the Captain, halting his company and riding forward. He was a thin and foppish young gentleman in a flaxen wig, and spoke with a high sense of authority, having but recently sacrificed the pleasures of his coffee-house and a fine view of St. James's Park to seek even in the cannon's mouth a bubble reputation that promised to be fashionable.

"Hullo! what's the meaning of this?"

"Bees," answered Captain Barker, shortly. "Narcissus, is the board ready?"

"Do you know, sir, that his Majesty is shortly expected along here?"

"To be sure I do."

"Then, sir, you are obstructing the road. This is most irregular."

"Not at all—most regular thing in the

world. A little early, perhaps, for the first swarm, but——"

"Be so good as to take down that ladder at once, and let my company pass."

"A step higher, Tristram," said the little man, turning a deaf ear to this order. "Better use the right hand. Wait a moment, while I get the hive underneath."

"Take down that ladder!" shouted the red-coated officer.

"You must wait a moment, I'm afraid."

"You refuse?"

"Oh, dear, yes! Keep back, sir, for the bees are easily frightened."

"Sergeant!" foamed the young man, "come and remove this ladder!"

He spurred his horse up to the arch as the sergeant stepped forward. The beast, being restive, rubbed against the ladder with his flank and shook it violently just as Tristram dislodged the swarm overhead. Captain Barker reached out, however, and caught them deftly in the upturned hive. Into it they tumbled plump. But the little man, exasperated by the shock, had now completely lost his temper. With sudden and infernal malice he inverted the bee-hive and clapped it, bees and all, on the officer's head.

With that he skipped down to the ground, and Tristram, foreseeing mischief, slid down after him, quick as thought.

The officer roared like Hercules caught in the shirt of Nessus. Nor for a few seconds could he get rid of his diabolical helmet: for a couple of bees had stung the charger, which began to plunge and caper like a mad thing, scattering the crowd right and left with his hoofs. When at length he shook the hive off, the furious swarm poured out upon the air, dealing vengeance. The soldiers, whose red coats attracted them at once, fled this way and that, howling with pain, pursued now by the bees and now chased into circles by the lashing heels of the grey horse. The poor brute was stung by degrees into a frenzy. With a wild leap, in which his four legs seemed to meet under his belly, he pitched his master clean over the crupper, and, as a wind through chaff, swept through the people at a gallop and off along the road towards the town.

"Phew!" whistled Captain John Barker: and stepping quickly to the prostrate officer he whipped the unhappy gentleman's sword from its sheath and handed it to Tristram.

"We'd best get out of this."

"That's not easy. There's a score of soldiers

between us and the gate; and the sergeant looks like mischief."

"Bless my soul, what a face I've put on that young man!"

The officer, who had been stunned for a moment by his fall, was soon recalled to life by the pain of the stings. He sat up and looked round. Already his face had about as much feature as a turnip. His eyes were closing fast, and a lump as large as a plover's egg hung on his under lip.

"Seize those men!" he shouted, and began a string of oaths, but stopped because the utterance caused him agony.

The sergeant, who had been bending over him, drew his side-arm and advanced—a hulking big fellow with a pimply face, and an ugly look in his eye.

"Dad," said Tristram, "you made me promise once never to run a man through unless he molested me in the midst of a peaceful pursuit."

"Well?"

"It appears to me that bee-keeping is a peaceful pursuit."

"Decidedly."

"And that this fellow is going to molest me."

"It looks like it."

"Then I may run him through?"

"Say rather that you must."

"Thank you, dad. I felt sure of it; but this is the first time I've had to decide, and as it was a promise—You'd best get behind me, I think. Set your back to the arch. Now, sir."

"You are my prisoners," the sergeant announced.

"Pardon me. Let me direct your notice to this weapon, which is in *carte*—you seem to have overlooked it."

"You are making matters worse."

"That is very likely. Guard, sir, if you please."

"You mean to resist?"

"Ah, have you grasped that fact, at last?"

The sergeant rushed upon him, and crossed swords. His first lunge was put aside easily, and he was forced to break ground.

"Hullo! So you can really fence!" he panted, feinting and aiming a furious thrust at Tristram's throat.

"Upon my word," said Tristram, parrying, and running him through the thigh as he recovered, "this gentleman seems astonished at everything!"

As the sergeant dropped, Captain Barker

darted from behind Tristram and pounced upon a musket which one of the soldiers had abandoned when first assailed by the bees.

"This gets serious," he muttered. "Those fellows yonder are fixing bayonets."

Indeed, some half-a-dozen of the red-coats had already done so, and surrender seemed but a matter of a few moments only.

"Give me the musket," said Tristram placidly, "and take the sword. My arm is longer than yours. Now get behind my shoulder again. Don't expose yourself, but if one of these fellows slips under my guard, I leave him to you."

"Good boy!" murmured the little man, exchanging weapons. It is a fact that tears of pride filled his eyes.

"There are six of them. Excuse me, dad, if I ask you to look out for your head. I am going to try a *moulinet*."

The six soldiers came on in a very determined manner, each man presenting his bayonet at Tristram's chest. They had little doubt of his instant submission, and were considerably surprised when Tristram, lifting the musket by its barrel, began to whirl it round his head with the fury of a maniac. The foremost, as the butt whizzed by his cheek, drew back a pace.

"Run the rebels through!" cursed the officer behind them.

The leader shortened his grasp on his bayonet, and, watching his opportunity, dashed under Tristram's arm. At the same instant Captain Barker popped out, and with a quiet pass spitted him clean through the right lung.

"All together, you sons of dogs!" yelled the sergeant, who had dragged himself to a little distance, and was stanching the flow of blood from his wounded thigh.

Two of the soldiers heard the advice and came on together with a rush. The first of them caught the full swing of Tristram's musket on the side of his stiff cap and went down like an ox. The second took Captain Barker's sword through the left arm and dropped his bayonet. But before either Tristram or the Captain could disengage his weapon the other three assailants were upon them, and the fight was over.

"Surrender!" cried one, holding his point against Tristram's chest.

"Must I?" the latter inquired, turning to Captain Barker.

"H'm, there seems to be no choice."

"And you, also, sir."

"Certainly. Here is my sword; it belongs to your captain, yonder, whom you may recognise

by his uniform. Assure him, with my compliments——"

He was interrupted by the clatter of hoofs, and two gentlemen on horseback came cantering up the road and drew rein suddenly.

"Hey! What have we here?" demanded a foreign voice.

The soldiers turned and presented arms in a flurry. The taller of the two horsemen was an extremely handsome cavalier in a nut-brown peruque and scarlet riding-suit on which several orders glistened. He bestrode a black charger of remarkable size and beauty; and seemed, by his stature and presence, to domineer over his companion, a small man with a hooked nose and an extremely emaciated face, who wore a plain habit of dark purple and rode a sorrel blood-mare of no especial points. Nevertheless it was this little man who had spoken, and at the sound of his voice a whisper ran through the crowd—

"The King!"

It was, in fact, his Majesty, King William III., who, tired of the slow jolting of the royal coach along the abominable road of that period, had exchanged that equipage for his favourite mare and cantered ahead of his escort, refreshing his senses in the strong breeze that swept from seaward across the level country.

"Sir, will you be good enough to explain?" he demanded again, addressing the unfortunate officer, who had picked himself up from the road, and stood covered with shame and swellings.

"Your Majesty, the two prisoners here were engaged in obstructing your Majesty's high-road."

"They seem to be still doing so."

"And knowing that your Majesty was shortly expected to pass, I proceeded to remove them."

"But what is this? A company of my foot-guards in confusion! One—two—three—four of them wounded—if, indeed, one is not killed outright! Do you tell me that this old man and this boy have done it all, besides bruising the faces of a dozen more?"

"They and a swarm of cursed bees, your Majesty."

"This is incredible. Bees?"

"Yes, your Majesty," put in Captain Barker, "he is telling you the truth. You see, it happened that my bees swarmed this afternoon, and had no better taste than to alight on this arch, under which your Majesty was shortly expected to pass. We were about to hive them when this young gentleman came along at the head of his company, and there arose a discussion, at the end of which I hived him instead."

"But these wounded men——"

"Ah, your Majesty, it was unfortunate; but one can never tell where these discussions will end."

"Three of my men and a sergeant placed *hors de combat*—a dozen more unfit to be seen—an officer dismounted, and his whole company scattered like a flock of geese! I am seriously annoyed, sir. What is your name?"

"Sire, I am called Captain Barker, and was formerly an officer in the fleet of his late Majesty King Charles the Second."

"Barker—Barker, I seem to remember your name. Captain John Barker, are you not?"

"That is so."

"Sometime in command of the *Wasp* frigate?"

"Your Majesty has a perfect recollection of his most insignificant enemies."

King William bit his lip.

"My memory is good, Captain Barker, as you say. Why did you quit the service?"

"For private reasons."

"Come, sir; you were, if I remember right, a gallant commander. With such their country's service stands above private reasons. Of late your country's claim has been urgent upon all brave men; and, by the havoc I see around, you are not past warfare."

"Well, but——"

"Speak out."

"Sire, all my life I have fought against Dutchmen."

"You found them worthy foes, I expect."

"In all respects."

"Would they be less worthy allies?"

"Not at all. But consider, sire, the habits of a lifetime. From boyhood I never met a Dutchman whom it was not my duty to knock down. To-day, if I sailed in an English ship-of-war, what should I find? Dutchmen all around me. Your Majesty, I cannot speak the Dutch language except with a cutlass. I distrust my habits. They would infallibly lead to confusion. In the heat of action, for instance——"

The little man stopped abruptly. It seemed that his speech gave uncommon pleasure to the tall gentleman on the black charger, whose face twitched with a barely perceptible smile. King William, on the other hand, was frowning heavily.

"Sir," he said, "your tongue runs dangerously near sedition."

"I am sorry your Majesty thinks so."

"You are also very foolish. I find you incurring my just anger, and hint, as plainly as I can, at an honourable way of escape. Captain

Barker, are you aware that your case is serious?"

"I am, sire. Nevertheless, I decline to escape by the road you are good enough to leave open."

"Your reasons?"

"They are private, as I had the honour to inform your Majesty."

"My lord," said the King, turning irritably to his companion, "what shall I do to this intractable old man? You have a voice in this, seeing that he has spoilt four of your favourite guards."

The tall man in scarlet bent and muttered a word or two in a low voice.

"Ah, to be sure: I had forgotten the youngster. Is this your son, sir?"

"By adoption only."

"A strapping fellow," said his Majesty, eyeing Tristram from head to foot.

"And as good as he's tall. Sire, his offence —if offence it be—arose from the affection he bears me, and from no worse cause. He would not willingly hurt a fly."

"What is he called?"

"Tristram."

"He has a second name, I suppose?"

"Tristram Salt, then, in full."

The man in scarlet at these words gave a quick, penetrating glance at the speaker, and for an instant seemed about to speak; but closed his lips again, and fell to regarding Tristram with interest, as King William went on—

"He ought to be in my army."

"Your Majesty does him much honour, but ——"

"But?"

"May it please your Majesty, I had other intentions concerning him."

"My lord of Marlborough," said the King, turning coldly from the little man and pointing with his gloved hand towards Tristram, "allow me to present you with a recruit."

Captain Barker's face was twisted with a spasm of fury. But as he stammered for words another voice was lifted, and Captain Runacles came through the crowd. He had been fetched from his laboratory by Mr. Swiggs, and had arrived on the scene in time to hear the last sentence.

"Your Majesty! Listen to me!"

King William was turning calmly to ride back to his escort. But at sight of the intruder's commanding and venerable figure he checked his mare.

"Pray, sir, who are you? And what have you to say?"

"I'm Jeremy Runacles, and this lad's guardian."

"He is peculiarly unfortunate in the loyalty of his protectors."

"Sire, I have served my country in times past."

"I know it, Captain Runacles. But it seems that you, too, fight only against the Dutch."

"Your Majesty has, it appears, done me the honour to study my poor record."

"My word, sir! Does that surprise you?"

"No, sire, it reassures me. For you must be aware that I am no rebel."

"H'm."

"Though, to be sure, I cannot help my tastes."

"You may suffer for them, none the less."

"I am ready to pay for them. Since your Majesty has taken a fancy to this young man——"

"Who, by the way, has maltreated a whole company of my guards."

"——permit me, as his guardian, to ransom him. He has large estates."

"You forget, sir," exclaimed the King haughtily, "that I am punishing him. Do you entertain the idea of bribing me?"

"I forget nothing, sire. I even remember that this is England, and not Holland."

"My lord," said William, turning to the Earl of Marlborough, "I pray you dispose of the recruit as you think fit. Have him removed, and have the high-road cleared of these rebels; for I see my escort down the road."

And touching the sorrel with his heel, his Majesty cantered back to meet the approaching cavalcade.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EARL OF MARLBOROUGH SEEKS RECRUITS.

Night had fallen. It was past eight o'clock, and Captain John and Captain Jemmy sat facing each other, one on each side of the empty fireplace, in Captain John's library. They were in complete darkness—for the red glow of tobacco in the pipe which Captain Jemmy puffed dejectedly could hardly be called a light. For half-an-hour no word had been spoken, when somebody tapped at the door.

"What is it?" asked Captain Barker.

"A gentleman to see you," answered the voice of Mr. Swiggs.

"What's his name?"

"He won't say."

"Tell him I am busy to-night."

Narcissus withdrew, and knocked again, a minute later.

"He says he must see you."

"Have you turned him out?"

"I told him you were busy with Captain Jemmy. 'Who's Captain Jemmy?' he asks. 'Captain Jemmy Runacles,' I answers. 'All the better,' says he."

"Excuse me," said a voice at the door; "but my business concerns both of you gentlemen. Also it concerns Tristram Salt."

"Narcissus, bring a couple of candles."

While Mr. Swiggs was executing this order an oppressive silence filled the room. The stranger's dark shadow rested motionless by the doorway. Above the breathing of the three men could only be heard the far-off sound of Harwich bells still ringing their welcome to King William.

When the candles were brought in and Narcissus had retired again, after closing the shutters, the stranger removed the broad-brimmed hat and heavy cloak which he had worn till that moment, and tossed them negligently on the table before him.

It was the scarlet-coated cavalier who had ridden beside the King that afternoon.

"The Earl of Marlborough!"

"The same, sirs; and your servant."

"Be kind enough, my lord, to state the message you bring from your master, and to leave this house as soon as it is delivered."

To Captain Barker's astonishment, the Earl showed no sign of resenting this speech.

"You are wrong," he answered quietly; "William of Orange is not my master. If I

mistake not, you and I, gentlemen, acknowledge but one sovereign ruler, King James."

At these bold words, uttered in the calmest voice, the two captains caught their breath and stared at each other. Captain Runacles was the first to recover. He laughed incredulously.

"Your lordship appears to have forgotten Salisbury."

Any other man would have winced at this taunt. But the Earl of Marlborough met it with the face of a statue.

"Captain Runacles, I have neither forgotten it nor am likely to. The remembrance of that affair has followed me night and day. I cannot —even now that I am pardoned—rid myself of its horror. I cannot eat; I cannot sleep. I see my crime in its true light, and am appalled by its enormity. And yet—God help me!—I thought at the time I was saving my country. Gentlemen, you, who have faced no such responsibility as then confronted me, will be apt to judge me without mercy. I know not if I can persuade you that my remorse is honest. But consider—here am I at William's right hand, already rich and powerful, and possessing limitless prospects of increased power and riches. Yet I am ready to sacrifice everything, to brave everything, to bring utter ruin on my fortune,

if only I can rid myself of this nightmare of shame. Is this the attitude of insincerity?"

"Upon my word, my lord, I'd give something to know why the devil you tell all this to us."

"I hardly know myself," answered the Earl, sighing deeply, but still without a grain of expression on his handsome face. "A man haunted as I am can hardly account for all his utterances. I have come to do you a service, and, having done it, might have withdrawn without a word. But the sight of you recalled the honest words you spoke to the usurper this afternoon. Sirs, I envied you then; and just now an insane longing took hold of me to set myself right with two such inflexible friends of King James."

"Would it not be more to the point if you first obtained pardon from King James himself?"

"I have done so."

"Well, my lord, I cannot yet see what your affairs have to do with us. But if it will give you any pleasure that we should believe these remarkable statements——"

"I have assured you that it will."

"Then perhaps you will produce some proof of them in black and white."

The Earl drew a folded paper from his breast

and spread it upon the table before them. It was an affectionate letter of pardon, dated a month back from the Court of Saint Germains, written throughout and signed by the hand of King James himself.

"Thank you, my lord. When his Majesty writes thus, it is not for his subjects to bear rancour. Will you kindly state your immediate business?"

"It concerns the young man Tristram Salt. You desire that he should be restored to you?"

"My lord," said Captain Barker, "that young man is more to me than many sons."

"You are indignant at the recollection of this afternoon."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Much. But let me continue. Your adopted son, Captain Barker, is at this moment lying in the hold of his Majesty's frigate the *Good Intent*. He is in irons."

"In irons!"

"Yes, sir. He has undoubtedly imbibed your opinions with regard to the Dutch, for he began his military career by blacking the eyes of a gentleman of that nation, who, as ill-luck will have it, is his superior officer."

"The devil!"

"To-morrow morning he will receive six

dozen lashes—perhaps more. I take the most cheerful view in order to spare your feelings; but most decidedly it will be six dozen, unless——"

"Unless—what?"

"Unless I remit the sentence. The young man, you understand, was placed under my care."

"My lord, you will pardon him?"

"With pleasure. Nay, I will restore him to you this very night——"

Captain Barker leapt up from his seat in a transport of gratitude, and would have caught the Earl's hand had not his friend dragged him back by the coat-tails.

"——on conditions," his lordship concluded.

"Name them."

"In a moment. We are agreed, I believe, that to blacken a Dutchman's eyes is no great sin. There are too many Dutchmen around his Majesty—as you, sirs, had the courage to inform his Majesty this afternoon."

"Did we say that?"

"I understood you to hint it, at any rate. I assure you that I am never so much disposed to regret my change of allegiance on that November night at Salisbury as when I look around and see how little my own countrymen have profited by that action."

"A while ago," interposed Captain Runacles sharply, "it was the crime itself that pursued you with remorse."

"The results, sir, have helped me to see the crime in its proper light."

"My lord, I have the deepest respect for your genius; but at the same time it appears to me that you lack something."

"Indeed? It would be a kindness to point out in what respect——"

"Let me call it—a gift. But I interrupt you."

"To proceed, then. We are at one on the question of these Dutchmen; at one also on the question of William's high-handed action this afternoon. Let me propose a plan by which you can effectively mark your disgust of both, while at the same time you recover the young man on whom you set so much store. Gentlemen, you are not past serving your country on the seas."

"King William hinted as much to-day," replied Captain Barker, "and I gave him my answer."

"I appeal to you not in the name of William, but in the name of your true sovereign, King James."

"That is another matter, I'll admit. Would you mind putting the question definitely?"

"I must have your word to regard what I am about to say as a secret."

"If it does not bind us in any way."

"It does not. You are free to accept or reject my offer."

"We promise, then."

"Listen: I am in a position to offer each of you the command of one of his Majesty's ships."

"As a condition of getting back Tristram to-night?"

The Earl nodded.

"But excuse me——"

"Ah, I know what you will say. It is a sacrifice of your leisure. I admit it; but from certain expressions of yours this afternoon I gathered that your love for this lad might overcome your natural disinclination."

"You mistake. I was about to say that this offer of yours strikes us as rather barren. At least it might have been kept until King James is restored to his country. In that event he may very well prefer to give his commands to younger men; but in any case he will find us obedient to his royal wish."

"That is a very loyal attitude. But, as it happens, you would be required to enter into your commands before his Majesty's restoration."

"Explain yourself, my lord."

"I am not in a position to speak with authority or exactness of the events which will shortly take place in the British fleet. I am a mere soldier, you understand. But let us suppose a case. King William sails early to-morrow, with Rear-Admiral Rooke's squadron, for the Maese. Let us suppose that no sooner is his Majesty landed at The Hague and safe in his own beloved realm than our gallant English sailors display a just distaste for their Dutch commanders by setting those commanders ashore, and running—let us say—for Calais, where their true Sovereign waits to be conveyed across to the country which his rival has quitted. Obviously, for this purpose, the fleet would need, on the spot, capable officers to step into the shoes of the deposed Dutchmen."

"You propose that Jack and I shall be two of these officers?" asked Captain Runacles, slowly, with a glance at his comrade.

"I think it advisable that you should be at The Hague. You understand that I merely sketch out a possible course of events."

"Of course. Do you think it likely that the British squadron—supposing it to behave as you say—would receive support at Calais?"

"I fancy it might find a large squadron of

his French Majesty's fleet waiting there to co-operate."

"And the army?"

"It is possible that events might happen, about that time, among our regiments in Flanders."

"That, in other words, they would desert to King Lewis?"

"You put it crudely, Captain Runacles. I believe that our gallant soldiers will act with a single eye to their country's welfare; and I am sure they will do nothing that can be construed as a blot upon their country's flag."

"I also am tolerably certain of that, my lord," answered Captain Jemmy, drily. "Come, Jack—your answer?"

The little hunchback had been leaning back, during the last minute or two, with his face in the shadow; but at these words he bent forward. His cheeks were white and drawn.

"Why must I give the answer, Jemmy?"

"Because the lad is your son. It rests with you to save him or not."

Captain Barker stood up.

"You'll abide by my decision?"

"Certainly." Captain Runacles crossed his legs and took snuff deliberately.

"Then," said the little man, dragging out

the words syllable by syllable, "there, my lord, are your hat and cloak. Oblige me by quitting this house of mine at once."

"God bless you, Jack!" muttered his friend.

The Earl's brow did not even flush at the rebuff. Throughout his career this extraordinary man was able to overlook the contempt of others as easily as he disregarded their sufferings. Probably, as Captain Runacles had said, he lacked a gift.

On this occasion he picked up his hat and cloak without a trace of discomposure.

"I understand you to refuse my offer?" he said.

"Yes."

"You prefer that the young man should receive six dozen lashes to-morrow morning."

Captain Barker winced, and his mouth contracted painfully.

"My lord, I took that boy from his dead mother when he was a few hours old. Never in his life has a hand been laid upon him in anger; he will hardly understand what it means. But he has been taught to know honour, and to cherish it. I choose as he would choose, were he here."

"Are you going, my lord?" added Captain Jemmy. "You have your answer."

"Not quite yet, I fancy. Captain Barker, you told me you took this lad from his dead mother. She was a Mistress Salt, I believe."

"Excuse me if I fail to see——"

"You will see in a moment. I am not wrong, perhaps, in supposing that lady to have been the wife of Roderick Salt, sometime my comrade in the Foot Guards. He married in Harwich, I remember; and in many respects the resemblance which this lad bears to him is remarkable."

"There is no likeness in their characters, my lord."

"I daresay not; indeed, I hope not. But suppose now I inform you that Roderick Salt is still alive——"

The Earl broke off and looked at the two captains narrowly.

"Did you know that?" he asked.

There was no answer.

"I seem to remember an expression which you, Captain Runacles, let fall this afternoon. You told his Majesty that Tristram Salt owned large estates. Is the boy's father aware of this?"

Again he paused for an answer, but none came.

"These estates are administered under trust, I presume. Who are the legal trustees?"

"I am," Captain Jemmy replied, with a sudden effort.

"You alone?"

Captain Jemmy, after struggling for a moment with the wrath in his throat, answered—

"I refuse to say."

"Well, well, the affair seems to need some explanation, but doubtless admits of a very good one. It is none of my business, and I do not ask you to satisfy me. But I cannot help thinking that Roderick Salt will be hardly more astonished to find that his son is a man of large estates than disposed to make inquiries——"

"What do you mean, my lord?"

"I mean that, as father and son happen at this moment to lie aboard the same vessel, the *Good Intent*——"

The chair which Captain Barker had been grasping and tilting impatiently fell to the floor with a crash.

"——I foresee a scene of happy recognition and mutual explanations. We will suppose the father to learn the truth before to-morrow's punishment is inflicted. We will picture his feelings"—the Earl paused, and fired a shot more or less at a venture—"when he becomes aware that, though by law enabled to buy his son off from military service, he has by chicanery

been rendered powerless. We will imagine him an enforced spectator, wincing as each stroke draws blood——"

"You will do this thing? You will tell him?"

"My dear sirs, I shall hate to do it. In proof that I speak sincerely, let me say that my offer still remains open. May I now count on your accepting it?"

"No!" thundered the little man, springing forward in a fury. Captain Jemmy caught him by the arm, however, and forced him back to the armchair. The Earl shrugged his shoulders.

"Truly you are a Roman parent," said he, bowing ironically; "but you will excuse me if I find it time to seek the lad's natural father. Remember, if you please, gentlemen, your promise of silence."

He opened the door, and passed quietly through the hall and out of the house. In the road at the foot of the garden a sergeant stepped out of the shadow and saluted him.

The Earl gave a muttered order.

"Where is my horse?" he asked.

"A little up the road. The orderly is walking him up and down to keep him warm."

The Earl nodded and walked on. A hundred yards further he came up with them, and, climbing

into the saddle, trotted off towards Harwich, the orderly at his heels.

At the Cock and Pye Stairs a boat was waiting. He dismounted, and, giving his horse over to the orderly, stepped on board and was rowed swiftly out towards the harbour, where the lights of the squadron flickered, and its great hulls brooded, over the jet-black water. As the boat crossed under the tilted stern and high, flaming lanterns of Rear-Admiral Rooke's ship, the *Foresight*, the sentry on deck sang out his challenge.

It was answered. The boat dropped alongside and the Earl climbed upon deck. Turning at the top of the ladder, he gave his boatman the order to wait for half an hour, and, acknowledging the sentry's salute, made his way aft, and down the companion-stairs to the cabin set apart for him.

In the passage below was a second sentry, pacing up and down; and by the Earl's door an orderly standing ready.

"Send Captain Salt to me. After that, you may retire."

The man saluted, and went off on his errand, and the Earl stepped into his cabin. The furniture of this narrow apartment consisted of a hanging-lamp, a chair or two, a chest heaped with dispatch-boxes, and a swing-table upon

which a map of the Low Countries was spread amid regimental lists and reports, writing materials, works on fortification, official seals, and piles of papers not yet reduced to order. Pushing aside the map and a treatise by the Maréchal de Vauban that lay, face downwards, upon it, the Earl drew a blank sheet of paper towards him, dipped pen in ink, and, after a moment's consideration, scribbled a sentence. Then, sprinkling it quickly with sand, he folded the paper, and was about to seal it, when a light tap sounded on the cabin-door.

"Come in," said the Earl, quietly, holding the sealing-wax to the flame, and without troubling to turn.

The man who stood on the threshold demands a somewhat particular description.

He was tall and of an eminently graceful figure. The uniform which he carried—that of a captain in the 1st or Royal Regiment of Foot—well set off his small waist, deep chest, and square shoulders. His complexion was clear and sanguine, albeit no longer retaining the candour of youth; his wig was carefully curled, and in colour a light golden-brown. Though in fact his age was not far short of fifty, he looked hardly a day older than thirty-five.

In many respects his resemblance to Tristram

was exceedingly close. The stature and proportions were Tristram's; the nose like Tristram's in shape, but slightly longer; the eyes of the same greyish blue, though in this case deep lines radiated from the outer corners. Above all, there was a fugitive, baffling likeness, that belonged to no particular feature, but to all. On the other hand, the difference in expression between the two faces was hardly less striking: for whereas Tristram's beamed a modest kindliness on his fellows, this face looked out on the world with an unshrinking audacity. Beside it the Earl of Marlborough's handsome countenance seemed to lack intelligence; but the Earl's countenance was then, and remains to-day, an impenetrable mask.

"You sent for me, my lord?" Captain Salt's voice was silvery in tone, and pleasant to hear as running water.

"I did," said the Earl, pressing his seal upon the letter, and sitting down to direct it. "You have the lists?"

The other drew a bundle of papers from his breast-pocket, and, advancing, laid them upon the table. The Earl put the letter aside, opened the bundle, and ran his eye over its contents.

"You are sure of all these men?"

"Quite."

"You seem to have enough. We mustn't

overdo this, you understand? It wouldn't do for the affair to—succeed."

Captain Salt smiled.

"If they carry off a vessel or two," the Earl went on, "it's no great loss, and it will give Saint Germains the agreeable notion that something is about to happen. They've been plaguing me again. This time it's an urgent letter in my royal master's own hand. He calls on me to bring over the whole army in the very first action—the born fool! Can he really believe I love him so dearly? Has he really persuaded himself that I've forgotten——?"

He checked himself; but for the first time that evening his face was suffused with a hot flush. For, in fact, he was thinking of his sister, Arabella Churchill; and John Churchill, though he had made no scruple to profit by his sister's shame, had never forgiven it.

Captain Salt filled up the pause in his dulcet voice—

"We want, my lord, such a mutiny as, without succeeding, shall convince England of the strong dissatisfaction felt by our forces at the favouritism shown by his Majesty towards the Dutch."

"Salt," said his lordship, eyeing him narrowly, "you are remarkably intelligent."

"Why, my lord, should I conceal my thoughts when they tally with my honest hopes? I look around, and what do I see? Dutchmen filling every lucrative post; Dutchmen crowding the House of Lords; Dutchmen commanding our armies; Dutchmen pocketing our fattest revenues. England is weary of it. I, as an Englishman, am weary of it. My lord, if I dared to say it——"

"Would you mind looking out and observing if the sentry is at his post?"

Captain Salt stepped to the door and opened it. The sentry was at the far end of the passage, engaged in his steady tramp to and fro.

"My lord," he said, closing the door softly, and returning, "let this mutiny fail. It will serve its purpose if it brings home to the understanding of Englishmen the iniquity of this plague of Dutchmen. Let that feeling ripen. You will return before the winter, and by that time you may strike boldly. Then, from your place in the House of Lords you can move an address——"

"Go on," murmured the Earl, as he paused for a moment.

"——an address praying that all foreigners may be dismissed from his Majesty's service."

The Earl looked up swiftly, and checked his fingers, which had been drumming on the table.

"Decidedly you are intelligent," he said, very slowly.

"What can William do if that address is carried, as it may be? To yield will be to discard his dearest friends: to resist will mean a national rising. He will lose his crown."

"And then?"

"My lord, *may it not be possible to eject William without restoring James?*"

"Ah!"

"There is the Princess Anne."

The Earl looked into his companion's eyes and read his own thoughts there. James was a Papist, William a Dutchman; but the Princess Anne was an Englishwoman and a Protestant. And the Earl and his countess held the Princess Anne under their thumbs. Let her succeed to the throne, and he would be, to all intents, King of England. Nay, he would hold the balance of Europe in his palm.

"My friend," he said, under his breath, "you are too dangerous." Aloud he gave the talk a new turn.

"This mutiny will not succeed," he observed, reflectively. "The men who intend to rise must be informed against."

"It appears so."

"But not too soon. They must not succeed, as I said; but they must have time enough to show their countrymen that the discontent is serious, and to convince James that only an accident has prevented their coming over to him in a body."

"That is clear enough."

"The only question," the Earl pursued, is—who is to give the information at the proper moment?"

"Undoubtedly that is a difficulty."

"I thought—excuse me if I come to the point—I thought that *you* might do so."

"My lord!"

"You object?"

"Decidedly I do. Already I have risked much in this business——"

"I can think of nobody," said the Earl, coldly, "so well suited for the task. William thinks you are his spy, and would receive your information without suspicion. He does not guess that, owing to my knowledge of your past—of the affair of the dice at Antwerp, for instance, or that trivial letter from Saint Germains which I happen to possess——"

Captain Salt's sanguine cheeks were by this time white as death.

"If you insist——" he stammered in a hoarse voice that bore no resemblance to his natural tone.

"I'm afraid I must. At the same time I mean to reward you," the Earl continued pleasantly; "and a portion of the reward shall be paid in advance. My dear captain, I have the most delightful surprise for you. You were once a married man, and the lady you married was a native of this port."

"Thank you, my lord; I was aware of the fact."

"You left her."

"I did."

"And in your absence she bore you a son."

"I have since heard a rumour to that effect," said Captain Salt, coldly.

"Cherish that son, for his worth to you is inestimable. He lies, at this moment, on board the *Good Intent*—I regret to say in irons. His Majesty enlisted him this afternoon, somewhat against his will, and he began very unluckily by kicking his superior officer from one end of the frigate to the other. It was the natural ebullition of youth, and the sergeant was a Dutchman. Therefore in this letter I have pardoned him. Take it—a boat is waiting for you—and convey it to his captain. Thereafter seek the poor lad

out and imprint the parental kiss upon both cheeks. Reveal yourself to him——"

"Your lordship is excessively kind, but I stand in no immediate need of filial love."

"My dear sir, I promise you that this son means thousands in your pocket. He means to you a calm old age, surrounded by luxuries which are hardly to be gained by espionage, however zealously practised."

"In what way, may I inquire?"

"I will inform you when you have done the small service I asked just now."

Captain Salt took the letter and moved towards the door.

"By the way," the Earl said, "it may be painful to you to be reminded of your former connection with Harwich; but did you happen to know, in those days, two gentlemen, captains in King Charles's Navy, and natives, I believe, of this town—Barker and Runacles?"

"I did. They were both, at one time, suitors for the hand of my late wife."

"Indeed? I have been trying to enlist them for this business of the mutiny."

"They were a simple pair, I remember, and would serve our purpose admirably."

"I found them a trifle too simple. Well, I won't keep you just now. Remember the help

I expect from you; but we will talk that over in a day or two. "Meanwhile, keep a parent's eye upon your son (he's called Tristram), for through him your reward will be attained. Good-night."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTAINS MAKE A FALSE START.

It was past midnight when Captain Runacles left his friend's pavilion and let himself through the little blue door to his own garden. The heavens were clear and starry, and he paused for a moment on the grass-plot, his hands clasped behind him, his head tilted back, and his eyes fixed on the Great Bear that hung directly overhead.

"Poor Jack!" he muttered, shaking his head at the constellation, as if gently accusing fate. His nature had been considerably softened by the little man's distress, and he had come away with a generous trouble in his heart.

"I shan't sleep a wink to-night," he decided; and went on inconsequently, "After all, a girl is less anxiety than a boy. People don't find it worth their while to kidnap a girl and flog her with a cat-o'-nine-tails. A turn of a die, and I'd have been in Jack's shoes to-night; while, as it is——"

As it was, however, he seemed hardly to enjoy his good fortune, for he added, still looking up—

"Plague seize it! I shan't sleep a wink—I

know I shan't. What a magnificent show of stars! Let me see, how long is it before daybreak? One—two—three—five hours only. I won't go to bed at all—I'll have a turn at the telescope."

He stole into the house softly, and climbed up the spiral staircase. A faint light shone out on the first landing from the half-open door of his workroom. He entered and turned up the lamp.

Its light revealed a scene of amazing disorder. The walls were covered with books and charts, the floor was littered with manuscripts, mathematical instruments, huge folios piled higgledy-piggledy, carpenter's tools, retorts, bottles of chemicals. In one corner, beside a door leading to his bedroom, stood a turning-lathe six inches deep in sawdust and shavings; in another, a human skeleton hung against the wall, its feet concealed by the model of a pumping-engine. Hard by was nailed a rack containing a couple of antique swords, a walking-cane, and a large telescope.

Captain Runacles took down this telescope and tucked it under his arm. Then, unhitching a dressing-gown of faded purple from a peg behind the door, he turned the lamp low again, and stepped out upon the landing. Here he paused for a minute and listened. The house was still. From the floor below ascended the

sound of breathing, regular and stertorous, which proved that Simeon was asleep.

He put his hand on the stair-rail and ascended to the next floor, passing his daughter's room on tip-toe. Above this, a flight of steps that was little more than a ladder led up into the obscurity of the attics. He climbed these steps, and, entering a lumber-room, where he had to duck his head to avoid striking the sloping roof, felt his way to a shuttered window, with the bolt of which he fumbled for a moment. When at length he drew the shutter open, a whiff of cold air streamed into the room and a parallelogram of purple sky was visible, studded with stars and crossed by the bars of a little balcony.

Captain Runacles stepped out upon this balcony. He had constructed it two years before, and it ran completely round the roof. Under his feet he heard the pigeons murmuring in their cote. Below were spread the dim grass-plots and flower-beds of his garden; and, far upon his right, the misty leagues of the North Sea. Full in front of him, over Harwich town, hung the dainty constellation of Cassiopeia's chair, and all around the vast army of heaven moved, silent and radiant. One seemed to hear its breathing up there, across the deep calm of the firmament.

He turned to the western horizon, to the

spot where the Pleiades had just set for the summer months, and lifting his glass, moved it slowly up towards Capella and the Kids, thence on to Perseus, and that most gorgeous tract of the Milky Way which lies thereby. Now, in the sword-handle of Perseus, as it is called, are set two clusters of gems, by trying to count which the Captain had, before now, amused himself for hours together. He was about to make another attempt, and, in fact, had reached fifty-six, when he felt a light touch on his elbow.

He faced quickly round. Behind him, on the balcony, stood his daughter.

"Don't be angry," she entreated in a whisper. "I heard you come up. I couldn't sleep until I saw you."

He looked at her sternly. Her feet were bare, and she wore but a dark cloak over her night-vail. In the years since we last saw her she had grown from an awkward girl into a lovely woman. Thick waves of dark hair, disarranged with much tossing on her pillow, fell upon her shoulders and straggled over the lace upon her bosom. The face they framed was pale in the starlight, but the lips were red, and the black eyes feverishly bright.

"Father," she went on, "I have something I must tell you."

Then, as he continued to regard her with displeasure, she broke off, and put the question that of all her trouble was uppermost.

"What has become of Tristram?"

"He has gone to make the campaign against the French. He was enlisted to-day. It was—unexpected," her father answered slowly, with his eyes fixed on hers.

"He went unwillingly," she said, speaking in a quick whisper; "he was dragged off—trepanned. Simeon told me about it, and besides, I know——"

"What do you know?"

"I know he never went willingly. Oh, father, listen"—with a swift and pretty impulse she stepped forward, and, reaching up her clasped hands, laid them on his shoulder—"Tristram—Tristram is very fond of me."

"Good Lord!"

Captain Jemmy raised a hand to disengage her grasp from his shoulder, but let it fall again.

"He told me so this morning at sunrise," she went on rapidly. "You see, it was May morning, and I went out to gather the dew, and he was there, in the garden already, and he said—well, he said what I told you; and being so masterful——"

"I can't say I've observed that quality in the

young man; but no doubt you've had better opportunities of judging."

"You shan't talk like that!" she broke out almost fiercely. It was curious that this girl, who, until this moment, had always trembled before her father, now began to dominate him by force of her passion.

"Oh, I mustn't, eh? Devil take the fellow! He tumbles out of one mess into another, and plays skittles with my peace of mind, and in return I'm not allowed a word!"

"Father, you will fetch him back?"

"Now, how the——"

"But you must."

"Indeed!"

"Because I love him dearly—there! I have nobody left but you, father." She knelt and caught his hand, exchanging audacity for entreaty in a second.

"Little maid," said her father, with a tenderness as sudden, "get up—your feet must be as cold as ice, on these slates. Go in, and go to bed."

"Let me stay a little. I can't sleep indoors. It was so happy this morning, and to-night the trouble is so heavy——"

Captain Jemmy vanished into the lumber-room for a moment, and reappeared, tugging an

old mattress after him, and bearing a tattered window-curtain under his left arm. He spread the mattress on the balcony, motioned his daughter to sit, and wrapped her feet warmly in his purple dressing-gown. Then, as she lay back, he spread the curtain over her, tucking it close round her young body. She thanked him with dim eyes.

"Sophia," he began, with much severity, "you say you have only your old father in the world, and I'm bound to say you seem to find it little enough. My dear, are you aware that you've just been disappointing my dearest hopes?"

"Don't say that!"

"I begin to think I mustn't say anything. I have brought you up carefully, instructing you in all polite learning, and even in some of the abstruser sciences. I have meant you, all along, to be the ornament of your sex, and now—the devil take it!—you prefer, after all, to be an ornament of the other! I intended you, by your accomplishments, to make that young man look foolish——"

"And I assure you, father dear, he did look foolish this morning, and again this afternoon in the summer-house."

"Now, upon my soul, Sophia! I call your attention to the fact I've been suspecting ever

since you began to speak, that you're at the bottom of all to-day's mischief. If that unfortunate youth hadn't been making love to you when he should have been attending to the bees, the chances are they would never have taken it into their heads to swarm upon that accursed arch, and consequently . . ."

There was nothing which Captain Runacles enjoyed so thoroughly as to discover the connection between effects and their causes. When such a chance offered, it was a common experience with him to be drawn into prolixity. But he was pained and surprised, nevertheless, after twenty minutes' discourse (in which he proved Sophia, and Sophia alone, to be responsible for the disasters of the day), to find that she had dropped asleep. He looked down for a minute or so upon her closed lids, then moved to the rail of the balcony and ejaculated under his breath—

"O woman—woman! Wise art thou as the dove, and about as harmless as the serpent!"

He considered the heavens for some moments, and added with some tartness but with a far-off look in his eyes, as though aiming the remark at the late Mrs. Runacles—

"Her charm, at any rate, is not derived from her mother."

He turned abruptly and considered her as she slept under the stars. Stooping after a minute or two, and lifting her very gently, he bore her into the house and down to her own room. As they descended the ladder from the attic, she stirred and opened her eyes drowsily—

"You will bring Tristram back?" she murmured, but so softly that he had to bend his head to catch the syllables.

Her eyes closed again before he could answer. He carried her to her bed and laid her upon it; then, after waiting a while to assure himself that she was fast asleep, retraced his steps softly to the little balcony.

He was pacing it, round and round, like a caged beast, when the stars grew faint and the silver ripple of the dayspring broke over the sea. For two hours and more he had been thinking hard, and he rested his elbows on the balcony and paused for a minute or two to watch the red ball of the sun as it heaved above the waters. To the north, beyond the roofs of Harwich, he saw the lights of the royal squadron still clear in the grey dawn. Next, his gaze turned to the triumphal arch in the road below, which wore a peculiarly dissipated look at this hour. Then it strayed back to the garden below him and beyond the party hedge; and was suddenly arrested.

On a rustic seat, in the far corner, sat Captain Barker, trying to read in a book.

The little man, too, had obviously passed the night out of his bed. His clothes were dishevelled and his attitude was one of extreme dejection. He kept his head bowed over the book and was wholly unaware of the eyes that watched him from the opposite pavilion.

But his friend above on the balcony displayed the most nervous apprehension of being seen. He took his hand from the rail, as if fearful of making the slightest sound, and stole back through the window, into the lumber-room. Once within the house, however, he behaved with the briskest determination. Descending, first of all, to his own room, he washed his face and towelled it till it glowed. Then, changing his coat and wig, he took up hat and cane, descended to the front door, and, crossing the grass-plot, let himself into Captain Barker's garden.

Captain Barker still sat and read in his book; and, as he read, the tears coursed down his wrinkled cheeks. For it was the first of the famous green volumes.

He looked up as his friend advanced; and Captain Jemmy was forced to regard the weathercock on the roof for a minute or so to make sure of the quarter in which the wind lay.

"It's due west," said Captain John, as he stared up; "and it's ebb-tide till nine o'clock. They'll sail early."

"H'm; I shouldn't wonder. You're early out of bed."

"Well, for the matter of that, so are you —eh?"

"I haven't been to bed."

"Nor have I."

"I've been thinking," said Captain Runacles.

"And I've been trying not to think."

"Well, but I've come to a conclusion. Go and get your hat, Jack."

"Why?"

"We've got to fetch Tristram back."

"How?"

"By tossing our consciences over the hedge and going to see King William."

The little man shook his head.

"No, Jemmy. You mean it kindly, and God bless you! But I can't do it."

"Why not? If I can do it——"

"You'd repent it, Jemmy. You're letting your love for me carry you too far."

"What put it into your head that I'd do this for love of you?"

"For Tristram, then."

"Damn Tristram! That youngster strikes me as causing a fuss quite out of proportion to his intrinsic worth."

"Well, but——"

"My dear Jack, I have reasons for wishing Tristram back. You needn't ask what they are, because I shan't tell you; but they're at least as intelligible as all the reasons you can find in that volume." He caught it out of his friend's hand, and read:—"*June 12th.—T. to-day refused his biscuit and milk at six in the morning, but took it an hour later. Peevish all night; in part (I think) because not yet recovered of his weaning, and also because his teeth (second pair on lower jaw) are troubling him. Query: If the biscuit should be boiled in the milk, or milk merely poured over biscuit*——" Here he glanced up, and seeing the anguish on the hunchback's face, handed back the book.

"I beg your pardon, Jack. But get your hat and come along."

"You forget, Jemmy. We gave our word, you know."

Captain Runacles stared.

"Trouble has unhinged your wits, my friend. Did you seriously imagine I intended to disclose to his Majesty the proposal we heard last night?"

"What, then?"

"My notion was that we should go and offer him our swords and our services in ransom for Tristram. He may rebuff us. On the other hand, there's a chance that he will not. You remember that he began, yesterday, by offering you this way of escape. You are to take me with you and beg for a renewal of that offer. May-be he'll demur. You'll then point out that you have two men's service to tender him in lieu of one. I *have* smelt powder in my time, Jack, and I once had the luck to run De Ruyter's pet captain through the sword-arm and to carry his ship. It's the very devil that I never could master the fellow's Dutch name sufficiently to remember it; but his Majesty—who has a greater grasp of his mother-tongue—may be able to recall it, and the recollection may turn the scale. Anyhow, we'll try."

"You can serve this William?"

"I can; for the matter stands thus: We go and say, 'Your Majesty has laid hands on a young man. Will it please your Majesty to take two old men in exchange?' We're a couple of old hulks, Jack; but we may serve, as well as a youngster, to be battered by the French."

"But, suppose that this plot breaks out—I mean that which the Earl hinted at?"

"My friend, that proposal may be divided into two parts. The first is mutiny; the second is desertion to the French. How do you like them? Could you stand by and help either?"

"Why, no," answered Captain Barker, with a brightening face; "because, after all, one could always die first."

"To be sure. Make haste, then, and fetch your hat, or we shall be too late to save the boy."

Captain Runacles waited at the foot of the garden, while his friend hurried into the house and returned in something like glee.

"We are lucky. Narcissus tells me his Majesty is sleeping ashore at Thomas Langley's house in Church Street. It seems that his cabin was not put rightly in order aboard the *Mary* yacht, and he won't embark until he has broken his fast."

"Come along, then," said Captain Jemmy, opening the gate; "we may catch him before he goes on board."

But scarcely had the pair set foot in the road outside when a voice commanded them to halt.

In front of them, barring the highway towards Harwich, stood a sergeant, with half-a-dozen soldiers at his back. They seemed to have sprung out of the hedge.

"Pardon, gentlemen; but you are walking towards Harwich."

"We are."

"My orders are to forbid it."

"Who gave you that order?"

"The General."

"What? The Earl of Marlborough?"

"Yes."

"So this is how he trusts our word!" muttered Captain Runacles. "But, excuse me," he added aloud, "our business is with his Majesty."

"I am truly sorry, gentlemen."

"You decline to let us pass?"

"I hope you will not insist."

"Well, but I have an idea. You can march us into Harwich as your prisoners. Take us into his Majesty's presence—that's all I ask, and I don't care how it's done. You shall have our *parole* if you please."

The sergeant shook his head. "It's against my orders."

"Then we must try to pass you."

"Suffer me to point out that we are seven to two."

"Thank you. But this is an affair of conscience."

"Nevertheless——"

"Confound it, sir!" broke in the little hunchback. "You are here, it seems, to frustrate our intentions; but I'm hanged if you shall criticise them too. Guard, sirs, if you please!"

And whipping out their swords, these indomitable old gentlemen fell with fury on their seven adversaries, and engaged them.

The struggle, however, lasted but a minute. Six bayonets are not to be charged with a couple of small-swords; and just as Captain Barker was on the point of spitting himself like an overhasty game chicken, the sergeant raised his side-arm and dealt him a cut over the head. Hat and wig broke the blow somewhat; but the little man dropped with a moan and lay quite still in the road.

Hearing the sound, Captain Jemmy turned, dropped his sword, and ran to lift his friend. The stroke had stunned him, and a trickle of blood ran from a slight scalp-wound and mingled with the dust.

"Jack, Jack!" sobbed his friend, kneeling and peering eagerly into his face. The hunchback opened his eyes a little and stared up vacantly.

As he did so the dull roar of heavy guns broke out in the direction of Harwich, shaking the earth under Captain Jemmy's feet. It was the town's parting salute to his Majesty, King

William the Third. And at the same moment the leading ship of the royal squadron swung out of harbour on the ebb-tide and, rounding the Guard Sandbank, stood majestically towards the open sea, her colours streaming and white canvas bellying over the blue waters.

CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER AND SON.

Tristram, meanwhile, was lying in darkness on board the *Good Intent*, a frigate of twenty-six guns, converted for the nonce into a transport-ship to accommodate three companies of his Majesty's Second Household Regiment, the Coldstreams. To this regiment the Earl had thought fit to attach him at first, not only on account of his fine inches, but also to keep him out of his father's way, being unwilling that the two should meet until he had visited the Blue Pavilions and endeavoured to bring Captain Barker and Captain Runacles to terms.

It cannot be said that his first acquaintance with military life had lifted Tristram's spirits. The frigate—to which he had been conveyed without further resistance—struck him as smelling extremely ill below decks; and he was somewhat dashed by the small amount of room at his service. Moreover, the new suit into which he was promptly clapped, though brilliant in colour, had been made for a smaller man, and obstructed his breathing, which would have been difficult enough in any case. On the gun-deck,

where he found himself, it was impossible to stand upright and equally impossible to lie at length, every foot of room between the tiers of 9-pounders being occupied by kits, knapsacks, chests, and mattresses littered about in all conceivable disorder, and the intervals between these bridged by the legs of his brothers-in-arms. As the Coldstreams were an exceedingly well-grown regiment, and for the most part deeply absorbed, just then, in dicing, quarrelling, chuck-penny, and lively discussions on the forthcoming campaign, Tristram had found the utmost difficulty in avoiding the sheaves of legs between him and the empty mattress assigned for his use. In his dejection of spirits it was a comfort to find that none of his future comrades turned a head to observe him. He cast himself down on the mattress and gave vent to a profound sigh.

"Alas, Sophia!" he ingeminated, "how liable to misconception—though doubtless wise on the whole—are the rulings of Providence, which in one short hour has torn me from your soft embrace to follow a calling which I foresee I shall detest!"

Unluckily, this emotion, though warranted by his circumstances, proved too great for the ready-made suit which he wore. At the first sigh two buttons burst from his jacket, one of

which flew a full two feet and struck the cheek of a Dutch sergeant who was taking forty winks upon the adjacent mattress.

"Vat the devil for?" exclaimed Sergeant Klomp, opening his eyes and glaring upon the recruit.

"I beg your pardon," said Tristram.

"Zat was in fon, hey?"

"On the contrary——"

"Vat for, if not?"

"It was accidental, I assure you. I was unbosoming myself——"

"So; I will deach you to onbosom yourself of his Majesty's buttons. Agsidental! You shall not be agsidental to me!" Sergeant Klomp rolled his eyes, and, picking up his cane, which lay beside him, rose to his feet and advanced with menace on his face.

Tristram hastily applied his syllogism. "It is right," he said to himself, "to resist when molested in a peaceful occupation. Sighing is a peaceful occupation. Therefore I must resist this man." In obedience to this valid conclusion he hit Sergeant Klomp in the stomach as he advanced, caught the cane out of his hand, and belaboured him the entire length of the gun-deck. It was impossible to do this without discommoding the legs of the company and

annoying them beyond measure. And consequently, at the end of ten minutes, Tristram found himself in irons in the lazarette, condemned to pass the night with two drunken men, whose snores were almost comforting in the pitchy darkness; for, as he told himself, human propinquity, if not exactly sympathy, is the first step towards it. He had been listening to this snoring for four hours, when a hatchway above him was lifted, and a lantern shone down into the lazarette. It was carried by a corporal, who came cautiously down the ladder, lighting the footsteps of an officer who followed and held a handkerchief to his nose, for the smell of the bilge was overpowering.

"Pah!" exclaimed this officer, as he arrived at the ladder's foot, and peered around. "Set the light down on the floor and leave us. What a hole!"

He waited whilst the corporal reascended the ladder and disappeared; then, picking up the lantern, held it aloft and let its rays shine full on Tristram's face.

"Ah," he said, after regarding our hero in silence for a few seconds, "it is unmistakable," and with that he sighed heavily.

"Pardon me, sir," said Tristram, "but the sight of me appears to cause you sorrow."

"On the contrary, it fills me with joy."

"I am glad to hear you say so, because, as I am fastened here in these irons, it would have been out of my power to relieve you of my presence. Since you are glad, however——"

"Unspeakably."

"——you would do me a great favour by saying why."

"Because—look at me, dear lad—because you are my only son."

"In that I really think you must be mistaken. There are two gentlemen yonder in the corner who at present are asleep. Are you quite sure one of these is not the object of your search?"

"Quite sure, my dear lad. It is unmistakable, as I said. You are Tristram?"

"I am; though I don't see why it should be unmistakable."

"Those eyes—that voice! It is impossible you should not be Margaret's son!"

"My mother's name was Margaret," Tristram answered; "that's true enough. She died when I was born."

"Tristram," said his visitor, lowering the lantern and bowing his head, "I was her unworthy husband, and am your father, Roderick Salt."

"That would certainly be plausible, but for one difficulty."

"What is it?"

"My father was drowned some months before I was born."

"You are mistaken. He was partially drowned, but not quite."

"I admit that alters the case."

"Shall I tell you how it happened?"

"By all means, sir; for I think the story must be interesting. At the same time I ought to warn you that I already possess a father, on whom you can scarcely improve."

"To whom do you refer?"

"He is called Captain Barker by those who love him less than I."

"Is it he, then, that has brought you up? Curse him!"

Tristram opened his eyes. "Why should you curse him?" he asked.

"Because he has stolen your love from me."

"But—excuse me—it is only this moment that I have heard you were competing for it."

"He has told you evil concerning me."

"On the contrary, he has never uttered your name. It was my nurse who told me one day that you were drowned; and even this turns out to be a mistake, as you were about to prove."

"My son, your words and bearing cut me to the heart. It is no less than I have deserved, perhaps; though, could you know all, I am sure you would judge me leniently. But at least I can give you some small proof of my love. Let me first release you from those irons."

He set the lantern on the floor, drew a small key from his pocket and unlocked his son's fetters.

"Thank you. That is decidedly more agreeable," said Tristram, stretching his stiffened limbs.

"You were suffering before I came?"

"Why, truly," Tristram replied, shrugging his shoulders as he glanced around; "I find military life duller than I expected. And since this is the first night I have spent from home——"

"My poor boy! Doubtless, too, you were brooding on what would happen to-morrow morning."

"Say rather on what happened this morning," corrected Tristram, his thoughts reverting to Sophia.

"But surely the prospect of to-morrow's punishment——"

"Oh, will there be a punishment to-morrow?"

"Why, you kicked a sergeant from one end of his Majesty's ship to the other! Did you imagine you could do that with impunity?"

"I assure you he deserved it."

"Nevertheless, you would have been flogged on deck to-morrow had I not come with a pardon."

"You astonish me: and really you have been very kind to me. Still, it would have been quite unjust."

Captain Salt regarded his son quietly for a moment or two. In truth he was somewhat staggered by this simplicity.

"You wish to escape from this service?" he asked.

"I dislike it more and more. Besides——"

"Tell me your desires; for, believe me, my son, I have no dearer wish than to further them."

Tristram held out a hand and took his father's.

"Forgive me, sir, for my coldness just now. Remember that I had never seen, had scarcely heard of, you before. You are very good to me. I believe, by looking in your eyes, that you love me; and I believe—I know—that in time I should love you greatly in return. But you must pardon that which I am going to say.

Sir, I cannot help loving best those who have dealt lovingly with me all my life. I was home-sick——" he broke off, as a lump rose in his throat.

"You shall go home," said Captain Salt.

Still holding his hand, Tristram stared at him incredulously.

"Why should you doubt me, my son? Do you think I despise those feelings, or can neglect them? No; I honour them, though bitterly regretting that, as fate has willed it, they can never be entertained for me."

"Don't say that, my father."

"Why should I blink the truth?" Captain Salt turned and brushed away a fictitious tear. "No, Tristram; you shall go back to those you love better. I only ask you to be patient for a few days; for, indeed, I have but a certain amount of influence with those who enlisted you to-day against your will. Listen: early to-morrow the squadron sets sail. If the wind holds we shall be within the Maese by Sunday morning. As soon as your regiment disembarks you shall be a free man: for not till then shall I have an opportunity of speaking with his Majesty. The squadron will be returning at once to this port, and I trust you may return with it. In the meantime you must give me

your word to remain where you are; for though the punishment is remitted, you are still under arrest. I have seen your captain, however, and you will find matters made very light for you. The sentry will bring you food and drink."

He stopped, for Tristram had fallen on one knee, and was passionately kissing his hand.

"How ill you must think of me!" he murmured; "and how can I thank you?"

"By keeping one tender thought or two for a father who held aloof from you while it was for your good, and came to you when, for the first time, you wanted him. Mine has been a hard life, Tristram, and not altogether a good one. By asking you to share it, I had done you heaven knows what injury."

This was true enough, and it struck the speaker as so pathetic that he managed even to squeeze up a tear.

"But come," he went on, with a sudden change to vivacity, "tell me how you happened into this scrape."

And so, with the lantern between them casting long spokes of light on the ship's timbers, the rafters, and the two drunken sleepers in the corner, father and son sat and talked for the better part of an hour; at the end of which time Captain Salt, who dexterously managed to

do nine-tenths of the listening, was pretty well posted in the affairs of the Blue Pavilions and their inmates, and knew almost as much of Tristram's past history as if he had spent a day with the thirty-seven green volumes. It was past two in the morning when he arose to return to his own ship.

At parting he kissed Tristram on both cheeks. "Farewell, dear lad," he said, with a manner that was admirably paternal; "we shall not meet again till the ships cast anchor in the Maese. Meanwhile steel your heart and look forward to a better fortune."

He picked up the lantern and, climbing the ladder, nodded back reassuringly as he lifted the hatch. At the same time he was secretly a good deal perplexed; for in all that he had learnt there was nothing to throw light on the Earl's words. "Now, why the devil is the lad to be looked after?" he wondered. For in fact Tristram had said nothing of the inheritance. And the reason for this was the very simple one that he himself knew nothing about it, Captain Barker and Captain Runacles having long ago agreed to keep it a secret from him until he should come of age. They had arrived at this resolution after many weeks of discussion, and beyond a doubt their wisdom

had been justified in the course of the last hour.

There was no perplexity visible, however, in the kindly smile which Tristram beheld and returned with interest. A moment after, he was left in blank darkness. But, being by this time tired out, as well as greatly comforted, he curled himself up on the bare floor, and within five minutes had dropped off into a dreamless sleep.

It was morning when he awoke, though he could not tell the hour; for the only light that reached his prison was filtered through the hatch above, which somebody had kindly tilted open. The sounds that woke him were those of feet moving to and fro in the captain's cabin overhead, and, far forward in the ship, the clatter of boots as the soldiers turned out. He looked about him and made two discoveries. In the first place, his two drunken companions had vanished, or had been removed; and secondly, their place was taken by a loaf and a tin pannikin.

He reached out a hand for these, and began without hesitation the first meal in his life of which the green volumes were to keep no record. With less hunger he might have found it nauseous; for the bread was incredibly mouldy and had been gnawed all round the crust by

rats, while the liquor in the pannikin was a mixture of fiery rum and unclean water. The first gulp fetched the tears; but, after sputtering a bit, he managed to swallow a good half of it. As he breakfasted he heard a deal of muffled shouting above, and then a distant clanking sound that was unfamiliar. The *Good Intent* was weighing anchor.

These noises, however, did not trouble Tristram, who was minded by this time to bear his fortune with hardihood. Only the thought of Sophia vexed him while he ate, and he sighed once or twice with a violence that set the rats scampering. Then it struck him that his morning prayers were unsaid, and, scrambling on his knees, he committed himself to the care of heaven, and afterwards felt still easier at heart. Also, being a prudent youth in some respects, he decided to reserve half of the loaf in case no more should be brought for the day; and, because his hunger was excessive, it took some time to decide on the amount to be set aside. Indeed, he was still discussing this with himself when the *Good Intent* shook with the roar of the royal salute.

For the moment Tristram imagined that he must be in the midst of a sea-fight at the very least. But his apprehensions were

presently distracted by the motions of the ship under him—motions which at length became erratic, and even alarming. For the *Good Intent* was not only heaving up and down, but seemed to be tearing forward in a series of vehement rushes, with intervals of languid indecision. Tristram's stomach soon began to abhor these intervals, and in a little while he found himself wondering to what end he had set aside half a loaf from his breakfast. For, as it seemed to him, he was going to die, and the sooner the better.

"Decidedly," he thought, "my breakfast was poisoned, else I could never feel like this."

The *Good Intent* took another lurch forward, and a clammy sweat broke out on both sides of his forehead.

"If I have enemies so wicked," sighed he, "may God forgive them!" And, uttering this Christian wish, he fell forward with his forehead against the boards.

A little past noon the sentry brought him a fresh loaf, with a plate of fat bacon and another pannikin. The sea being choppy, by this time the vessel echoed from end to end with groans and lamentations.

"Is it a massacre?" Tristram asked, sitting up and regarding the man with wild eyes. But

the sight of the bacon, which was plentifully doused with vinegar, conquered him afresh. The sentry chuckled and went away.

To be short, our hero passed two-and-twenty hours in this extremity of wretchedness, and was only aroused, early next morning, by a corporal who thrust his head in at the hatchway and bade him arise and come on deck with all speed, as the regiment was about to disembark. And, as a matter of fact, when Tristram tottered up the ladder into the fresh air which swept the deck, he found that, though he had been beyond remarking any difference in the ship's motion, she was now lying at anchor, and within a cable's length from a desolate shore, which began in sand-hills and ended in mist.

The rain was pouring perpendicularly from a leaden sky, and drenching the decks. The soldiers, in their great-coats, huddled together as they waited for the boats, and shrugged their shoulders to keep the drops from trickling down the napes of their necks. Somebody gave Tristram a great-coat and knapsack, and pointed out the group to which he was to attach himself. He obeyed, though scarcely aware of what he did: for his head was light, his hunger was ravenous, and his legs were trembling beneath him. A soldier cursed close by, and he cursed

too, echoing the man's words without knowing why. Another man slapped him on the back, mistaking him for a crony, and begged his pardon. "It really makes no difference," said Tristram politely, and at once fell to wondering if this remark were absurd or no. Beyond the grey veils of rain he spied, now and then, a cluster of red roofs, and a steeple close beside the shore.

"What place is that yonder?" he asked the man who stood at his elbow.

"Vlaardingen," said the fellow, gruffly. It was Sergeant Klomp, and Tristram turned it over in his mind whether to offer an apology or no. While he was still debating, a brisk young officer came along and called out—

"Get ready, boys. This is our turn."

In less than a minute after, for no apparent reason, the crowd around Tristram surged forward to the bulwarks, and he was carried along with the rush. Then he found himself swaying unsteadily down a flight of steps and calling to the men behind not to hustle and precipitate him into one or other of the two longboats that lay below. Into the nearer of these his company swept him, and poured in at his heels until the gunwale was nearly level with the water. The rowers pushed off in the nick of time, and pulled their freight slowly across

the sullen tide, while the rain beat down relentlessly.

As they neared the shore, a landing-stage, or low jetty, of sunk piles disengaged itself from the mist. This was the sole object that diversified the melancholy line of sand-banks, and towards it they were steered, Tristram looking eagerly out under the peak of his cap, from which a rivulet of water was by this time coursing down his nose.

Half-a-dozen grey figures were standing on the jetty, and, as the soldiers scrambled up its dripping steps, one of them advanced and touched Tristram by the elbow. It was his father.

"Safe and sound, my boy? *Parbleu!* but it's easy to see you're no accomplished sailor; but that's all the better."

Tristram was feeling too faint to contest this, though it appeared to him to be discutable.

"Let us get ahead of this mob," his father went on. "Come, use your best foot—it's no great distance."

He struck off the sodden track and dived into the mist, Tristram following close at his heels. Their way lay over hillocks and hollows of sand in which they sank ankle-deep at every

step. In two minutes they lost sight of the regiment and were walking with their faces set, as it seemed, towards a wall of grey atmosphere, impenetrable by the eye. After five minutes of this, Tristram groaned. He had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and his limbs were weak as water.

"Courage, my son! A few paces more."

Almost as he spoke a building loomed out of the mist, and they found themselves before a doorway, over which hung the sign of "The Four Seasons." A sentry, who stood beside the entrance, presented arms and let them pass. Captain Salt led the way indoors and up a rickety staircase to the right, on the first landing of which they found two pages in waiting.

"Say that Captain Salt desires to see his Majesty."

One of the pages tapped at the door, and, having delivered the message, commanded them to enter. The place in which Tristram now found himself was a low-browed room, smelling highly of sawdust and stale tobacco. It was bisected by a long table of clean white deal, at the end of which were seated three gentlemen whose attire bespoke a considerable estate. All three looked up as the pair entered, and in the centre our hero at once recognised his Majesty,

with the Earl of Marlborough upon his left hand, and upon his right a general of a plain but shrewd and honest countenance, who glanced at Captain Salt for a moment and resumed the writing upon which he was engaged.

King William set down the bundle of papers that he had been conning with a sour expression, as if tasting bad wine, and ordered the Captain to come forward; which he did, with a profound salute.

"I have examined the lists, Captain Salt. They tally with other information which my admirals and generals have been able to give me; though, as they have not your advantages, their knowledge is, of necessity, scantier."

Beneath his words there lurked a contempt which made the Captain wince.

"Your Majesty, I have endeavoured to do my duty—such as it is."

"You say well. The disgrace lies with those who make it necessary."

"I am glad your Majesty should regard it in that light."

"Rest assured that I do, and admit the magnitude of the service you have done us. I understand you have come for your reward."

"Say rather that I have brought it."

"Explain yourself."

"I ask no reward, your Majesty, but the discharge of this young recruit." As he spoke Captain Salt drew Tristram forward from the doorway, where he was standing awkwardly.

"This is very extraordinary. I expected some request for money, I will confess."

"There are some things which rank above money," said the Captain, with feeling.

"We are told so," replied William, drily. "But might I ask for an instance or two?"

"There is paternal love. Your Majesty, this young man is my son." The Captain, at this point, brushed away a tear with the back of his hand.

"Why—but surely I remember his face."

"That is probable: for you yourself, sire, did him the honour to enlist him, no longer ago than last Friday."

"I remember the occasion. But it did not then appear—at least, to my recollection—that he was a son of yours, Captain Salt."

"Will your Majesty be good enough to note the likeness between us?"

"I do not doubt your word. I merely remark that the two gentlemen who then interceded for him omitted to mention his parentage."

"Their names, I believe——"

"They were two gallant but wrong-headed gentlemen of his late Majesty's navy—Captain John Barker and Captain Jeremiah Runacles."

"It is to those gentlemen, who have guarded him from his infancy, that I would restore this young man."

"This is very magnanimous conduct."

"A father, sire, may, for his son's good, disregard his own yearnings. I would, with permission, escort him back to Harwich, and assure myself of his happiness. Your Majesty need have no doubt of my return with the next transport."

"Indeed, Captain Salt, I myself should advise you, for your own safety, to be out of the way until this small storm has blown over. Present yourself as soon as you return. Sir," he continued, addressing Tristram, "you are discharged from my service, which, I must say, has not bettered your looks. Return to your guardians, and, if they will allow you, cultivate some small amount of loyalty."

"I thank your Majesty very heartily," Tristram replied ingenuously, "and I regret if the plant has, until now, found no place in our garden."

"The squadron will sail again for England at midnight," said William, with a faint smile;

then, turning to the Earl of Marlborough, "My lord, will you write out the order?"

At this moment one of the pages entered with a note for the King.

"Let him come in," said William, after opening it and running his eye over the contents; then, addressing Captain Salt, "I fear this puts an end to our conversation for the time. If you will wait below, the necessary papers shall be brought to you. Farewell, young man; and when you embrace them, assure Captain Barker and Captain Runacles that I have still some hope of their finding a better mind."

They bowed and withdrew, giving place to the new-comer, who entered at that moment—an old gentleman in a suit of dark blue edged with silver. As he passed them in the doorway his eyes scanned Tristram narrowly, and he appeared to hesitate for a moment as if desirous of putting a question to the youth.

Unconscious of this look, Tristram followed his father down the stairs of the auberge. They had hardly reached the bottom, however, when a voice called from the landing above, and the Earl of Marlborough descended after them.

"Here are the papers," he said. "But young sir, would you mind waiting here for a

minute or two while I speak with your father in private?"

With this he opened a door upon the left and led the way through a dark passage to a covered skittle-alley at the back of the house. It was a deserted and ramshackle arcade, and offered the poorest cover from the rain, which dripped through the roof and drifted under the eaves. The skittles lay here and there, as if the last player, weary of the game, had been tossing them about at haphazard. Here the Earl paused, looked around him, and began in a low voice,

"My friend, I regret to perceive that you begin to act without instructions."

"In what way?"

"You propose to return at once to Harwich with this son of yours."

"Certainly, my lord. It appears to me that I have deserved a holiday by this week's work."

"You shall take one; but not at Harwich just yet."

"And why not at Harwich?"

"For two reasons. In the first place you do no good, but harm, in returning thither at this moment. Understand that I am only asking you to defer the visit for a week or two. At present I am awaiting certain necessary information,

without which you will hardly lay your hands on the good fortune I intend for you."

"You are mysterious, my lord. This boy of mine——"

"Will bring you wealth and dignity, I promise, if you allow me to conduct the affair. If not——"

"What is the other reason?"

"The other reason," replied the Earl, looking down and moving a skittle gently with the toe of his boot—"the other reason is that I require you to spend the first part of your holiday elsewhere."

"Where may that be?"

"At Saint Germains."

"My lord, you risk my neck with much composure!"

"There is no risk at all, unless——"

"Pray finish your sentence."

"——unless you refuse," said the Earl, significantly.

"Proceed, my lord." Captain Salt's face flushed scarlet; then a sweat broke out on his temples, where, an instant before, the veins had swelled with rage.

"There is nothing to prevent your starting at once. You have altered the fuses, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And made all the arrangements?"

"Nothing is omitted. The guns will be fired twenty minutes too soon, at ten minutes after nine. As William knows nothing about the signal, and has made his dispositions for half-past nine, the poor fellows will have some fun for their pains, after all."

"Excellent!" said the Earl, smiling. "It only remains for you to start. Here are the papers; I advise you to keep them carefully sorted. This, in cypher, is for James. It is full of promises; and, in addition, to keep his spirits up, you can give him an account of the mutiny, pointing out how near it came to success. A boat shall take you to Sevenbergen; after that you know the road—the usual one. The word is *Modena*. You will take your son with you, of course, and persuade him (if you can) that he is travelling back to Harwich by the shortest road."

"That will be difficult."

"From Paris return to Dunkirk, and there await a letter from me. By that time I hope to be able to send you information, on the strength of which you may at once sail for Harwich. Meanwhile, guard that young man as the apple of your eye."

We will return to the subject of this amiable advice. Tristram had been kicking his heels for ten minutes or more in the draughty passage, and wondering if he should ever know the taste of food again, when the door opened on the landing above, and the old gentleman in blue and silver descended the stairs from his audience. He was clearly in something of a hurry, and strode past our hero as if unaware of his presence, but turned on his heel at the end of the passage and came swiftly back.

"I ask your pardon, young man," he began, in a quick, foreign voice, "but I thought I heard his Majesty speaking to you of a Captain Runacles as I entered the room. Forgive me if I seem too inquisitive, but do you happen to know Captain Jeremiah Runacles?"

"I know no reason, sir, against my answering. I know him well, and love him."

"Ha? Where does he live?"

"In Harwich."

"He keeps hale?"

"In excellent health for his age."

"Could he still answer for himself with a small-sword?—I mean not with a young adversary, but, say, with a man of my age?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, sir." Tristram stared at the old gentleman, who was

of a tall, unwieldy figure, short, bull neck, and choleric complexion.

"You will see him again shortly?"

"With God's help I shall see him in three days' time."

"Then I'd be obliged by your taking him a message from me. Tell him, sir, that I, Captain Van Adrienssen, may be heard of at the Hague at any time, and have not forgotten a certain promise of his (to cut my comb) which he uttered at one time when our ships lay alongside off the Texel. Assure him that, though night parted us, I still retain the boot which he flung at my head and into my ship. Say that I have been waiting ever since for the man who fits that boot, and warn him that we are both well stricken in years and have little time left in which to try conclusions. You have that by heart?"

"Yes, sir."

"Repeat it."

Tristram did so.

"Very well; now be careful to deliver it."

And, nodding his head sharply, the old gentleman hurried away on his business just as the Earl and Captain Salt returned from their colloquy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOUR MEN AT THE "WHITE LAMB."

"WELL, my son," began Captain Salt, as the Earl reascended the stairs. "Thanks be that we are alone together at last! Do I not keep my promises?"

"Indeed, father, you are kind. There is only one thing——"

"What is that?"

"I should prefer to return to Harwich alive; and seeing that I have eaten nothing for a day and a half——"

His father interrupted him by taking his arm and hurrying him off to the kitchen of the auberge, where a fat woman was basting a couple of ducks before a roaring fire.

"Pardon me, mistress," he began in Dutch; "but can you give this young man a breakfast?"

The hostess seemed to be annoyed.

"What does he want?" she inquired, sharply.

The question being interpreted to Tristram, he answered that he wanted everything, but that in the meantime the ducks would serve to break the edge of his fast.

"But these are for his Majesty."

"What have you besides?"

"Salt fish."

"I will begin with salt fish."

"Bacon."

"I see," said Tristram, nodding up at a regiment of hams that depended from a rack overhead; "I will eat these also. What else?"

"Cheese."

"On second thoughts, I will begin with cheese, while the fish is being prepared. Is that all?"

"Mother of God! Is it not enough?"

"How can I tell yet? Let me see your bread and cheese."

The woman left her ducks, and in a minute had dumped down a loaf and a huge round cheese of an orange colour before our hero.

"When do we start?" he asked, with his mouth full.

"Shortly after dark."

"Then I have plenty of time."

"I should hope so. Hostess, bring a bottle of wine."

"Two bottles," Tristram interrupted.

"It will get into your head."

"I hope so, for my head is something light at present."

"You propose, then, to spend the day in eating and drinking?"

"Unless you know of some better amusement with which we can beguile the time."

"None whatever. And as I must leave you for some time while I make arrangements for our return——"

"I shall not be lonely," said Tristram, with a glance at the ducks, followed by an upward look of resignation directed at the rows of hams.

It was dark when Captain Salt returned, and found his son on the settle where he had left him. Tristram was not sitting, however, but stretched at length, and breathing heavily. At the further end of the table sat the host and hostess of the inn, engaged in making out the bill.

"One—two—three—six bottles!" exclaimed his father, counting the ruins on the board. "Why, the boy is drunk!"

"No, father," Tristram interrupted, sitting up and rubbing his eyes; "not so much drunk as asleep, and not so much asleep but that I could see the landlord here add three empty bottles to the two I had finished, without counting one that came full to the table and was emptied by him for his supper."

Captain Salt shot a searching glance at the couple, who coloured and seemed confused.

"What is this?" he cried, examining the reckoning. "Two ducks!"

"Ah, I'm afraid it is true that I ate one of the ducks."

"But they were for his Majesty."

"It appears they were cooked on the chance of pleasing his Majesty, who left, however, without inquiring for them. The landlord and his wife have just eaten the other. Is it time to start?"

"Yes."

Tristram jumped up and stretched himself, smiling amiably on the host and hostess, who returned his look with no very good will. Captain Salt, having made the proper deductions calmly, paid the reckoning, and they left the house.

Outside the weather was still dirty, and a wind, which had gradually risen since the morning, blew in their faces charged with chilly moisture, The mist, however, had cleared a little, and Tristram, as he rammed his hat tightly on his head before facing the night, could see the lights of the squadron far out upon the black and broken waters of the Maese.

"In what ship do we return?" he asked.

The wind, apparently, drowned his question; for Captain Salt started off without replying and

led the way down across the sand-banks. It seemed to Tristram that their path lay to the left of that by which they had approached the inn early in the morning. He was straining his eyes on the look-out for the wooden landing-stage, when suddenly, on climbing a ridge somewhat higher than the rest, he saw the white fringe of the waves glimmering close under his feet, and the inky shadow of a boat, in which sat a couple of dark forms. One of them, hearing the low whistle uttered by Captain Salt, scrambled forward to the bows and held out a hand.

Tristram looked at his father, who nodded. They entered the boat in silence, and within a minute were being rowed rapidly across the tide. It struck our hero that the oars made remarkably little noise, in spite of the energy with which they were plied. He was about to speak, but checked himself on seeing his father raise a finger to his lips. "What is the meaning of this?" he wondered. His enormous meal had made him drowsy; and deciding that, if not allowed to speak, he might at least nod, he closed his eyes.

He opened them again with a start. From the shore behind them the roar of guns had just burst out upon the night.

This was his first impression; but the sound was not repeated, and in a moment or two he fancied he must have been dreaming of the salute he had heard in the lazarette of the *Good Intent*, as the squadron sailed out of Harwich. The boat was still moving with unabated speed, and the dark, choppy water stretched all round them. Through the murky night the ships' lanterns still shone steadily enough, but further off than before, and at a sharp angle behind his right shoulder.

"It seems we are not steering very straight for the fleet," he could not help remarking.

"We are not steering for the fleet," said his father.

"But I thought——"

He broke off as a series of sharp flashes danced out in the distance, followed by the rattle of musketry and a dull, confused shouting.

"You perceive," Captain Salt remarked, "that the squadron is not the safest means of reaching Harwich."

"What are they doing out there?"

"They are killing each other."

"That sounds very unpleasant."

"And as the night is too dark to distinguish faces with any certainty, I thought you would prefer to go home by another way."

"A longer way?"

"It is certainly a trifle longer; but then, as it won't expose you to the risk of being killed——"

"That's true. I won't grudge the time."

The explosions of musketry, meanwhile, had been following each other faster and faster, and at length became incessant.

"Bravo!" muttered Captain Salt to himself; "this will take some time to quell."

"What did you say?"

"I was thinking, my son, that 'tis lucky you have somebody to look after you." Tristram sought for his father's hand and pressed it.

"I am not ungrateful, as you think."

"Why should I think so? You will have more yet to thank me for, I hope."

The boat at this moment swung to the left, around a sandy promontory that hid the jets of firearms behind them; but waves of light still flickered across the black sky and the shouting still went on, though growing fainter as they hurried forward. By one of the flashes, more vivid than the rest, and accompanied by the crackle of a whole volley, Tristram saw that the boat was now being propelled down a narrow channel, both shores of which he could just perceive across the gloom.

Captain Salt suddenly raised both hands to his mouth, and, hollowing the palms, uttered three mournful cries, long and loud, like the wailing of a gull.

Within half a minute the sound was echoed back from the darkness on the right shore, for which the boat immediately headed. After thirty strokes Tristram felt the sand rub beneath the keel, and they came to a stand.

"Show the light," his father called, jumping out into the water, that hardly covered the insteps of his riding-boots.

The red glow of a lantern appeared as if by magic, and revealed a man standing but twenty yards ahead, on a gentle slope of sand. He held the lantern in one hand, and his right arm was slipped through the bridles of two horses that waited, side by side, and ready saddled, their breath smoking out on the night wind.

"Dear me," Captain Salt observed, reaching a hand to Tristram, and helping him to land; "I forgot to ask if you could ride."

"A very little, my father."

"You will find it difficult, then, to trot. Therefore we will gallop."

"You intend me to climb upon one of these beasts?"

"That is easy enough."

"I do not deny it; but I suppose you also wish me to stay on."

"Come; we must lose no time."

"Luckily, the soil of Holland, as far as I am acquainted with it, is soft and sandy. On the other hand——"

"Well?"

"I was about to remark that they grow an immense quantity of tulips in this country, which demand a harder soil."

"We shall pass none."

"That is fortunate. For when I reach home and they ask me, 'Well, what have you done in Holland?' it would be sad to own, 'I have done little beyond rolling on a bed of tulips.'"

With this he climbed into the saddle and thrust his feet well into the stirrups, while his father whispered a word or two to the boatmen, who were about to push off on their return journey.

"Are you ready, my son?" he asked, returning and mounting beside him.

"Quite."

"Forward, then!"

The two horses broke into a trot. "Ugh," exclaimed Tristram, bobbing up and down.

"I told you we must go faster. Stick your knees tightly into the saddle—so."

The wind and the night began to race by Tristram's ears as his horse leapt forward. The motion became easier, but the pace was terrifying to a desperate degree; for it seemed that he sat upon nothing, but was being whirled through the air as from a catapult at the heels of his father, who pounded furiously through the darkness a dozen yards ahead. For three minutes at least he felt at every stride an extreme uncertainty as to his chances of re-alighting in the saddle. It reminded him of cup-and-ball, and he reflected with envy that the ball in that game is always attached to the cup with a string.

At the end of ten minutes Captain Salt reined up, and Tristram's horse, after being carried past for twenty yards by his mere impetus, stopped of his own accord and to his rider's intense satisfaction.

"Look," said the Captain, pointing to the sky behind them, which was now illumined by a broad scarlet glare.

"What is that?"

"One of the ships on fire."

"Then I am better off where I am."

"Did you doubt it?"

"I was beginning to. How much further must we ride?"

"Two leagues."

Tristram groaned, and they set off again, but more slowly, for the road now was paved with bricks instead of the loose sand over which they had travelled hitherto, and, moreover, it ran, without fence or parapet, along the top of a formidable dyke, the black waters of which, far beneath him, caused Tristram the most painful apprehension. Captain Salt, guessing this, slackened the pace to a walk. The glare still reddened the sky behind, but either the firing had ceased or they had passed beyond sound of it. At any rate, they only heard the water lapping in the dykes and the wind that howled over the wastes around.

Tristram had long since lost his hat, and his nose was bleeding from a sharp blow against his horse's neck. He was trying to stanch the flow when the chimes of a clock pealed down the wind from somewhere ahead and upon his right. His father halted again, and, after scanning the gloom for a minute, uttered again the three calls that were like the wailing of a gull.

Again the signal was answered, this time from their left, and the spark of a lantern appeared. "Dismount, my son," said the Captain, setting the example and leading his horse by the bridle towards the light; "we leave our horses here."

"For others?"

"No, for a canal-boat."

"This country may be flat," thought Tristram; "but decidedly the travelling is not monotonous."

As he drew near the lantern, he saw, indeed, that they were on the edge of a canal, wherein lay a long black barge, with a boy on horseback waiting on the tow-path, a little ahead of it. On the barge's deck by the tiller an immensely fat boatman leant and smoked his pipe, which he withdrew placidly from his lips as Captain Salt gave the pass-word to the man with the lantern and handed over the smoking horses.

"*Modena!*"

The fat man spat, stood upright, and prepared for business as the passengers stumbled on board. Not a word more was spoken until Tristram found himself in a long, low cabin, divided into two parts by a deal partition. By the light of a swinging lamp he saw that a bench ran along the after compartment, and asked if he might stretch himself out to sleep.

"By all means," said his father; "I was going to propose it myself. We shall travel without halting till morning."

"Then 'good-night.'"

"You appear in a hurry."

"It seems to me that it's my turn."

The barge was hardly in motion before Tristram began to snore. Nor did he awake till the sun was up and shining in through the little opening by the stern, through which he could see the legs of the fat steersman on deck. While he rubbed his eyes his father appeared at the cabin-door with a bundle in one hand and a big market-basket in the other.

"You sleep late, my son. I have already been marketing, as you see."

"Then we are at a standstill."

"Yes, but we move on again in three minutes."

"What have you bought?"

"Your breakfast. See——" and the Captain spread on the cabin table an enormous sausage, two loaves of bread, and a bottle of red wine.

"That is good, for I warn you I am hungry."

"But first of all you must dress."

"Am I not already dressed?"

"Let me point out that the uniform of a private soldier in his Majesty's Coldstream Guards differs in so many respects from the native costume of these parts that it can hardly fail to excite remark. Listen: I have here two suits of clothes, in which we must travel for the

next day or two; I as a private gentleman, and you as my lackey."

"I begin to see that this way back to Harwich has its difficulties as well as the other," sighed Tristram, while they changed their suits. This reflection threw him into a melancholy which lasted throughout the day, insomuch that he hardly found heart to go on deck, but sat on his bench in the cabin, feeding his heart on the prospect of Sophia's joy at his return and listening to his father, who sat and whistled on the cabin hatch, to the thud of the towing-horse's hoofs, and to the monotonous "huy!" and "vull!" of the boatman whenever their barge encountered another and one of the two slackened rope to allow passage.

Occasionally they were hailed from the bank by travellers who desired to journey down stream; but the invariable answer was that this barge had been hired by a nobleman who wished to travel without company and at his leisure. As Tristram, however, knew nothing of the Dutch language, he imagined these to be but kindly salutations of the inhabitants designed to enliven a voyage which (as he judged) must be inexpressibly tedious to anyone who made it with any other purpose than that of being restored to Sophia's embrace.

Towards sunset he went on deck, and observed his father steadily gazing at the left bank of the canal, parallel to which, and at a distance of five hundred yards or less, there ran an embankment with a high-road along the top of it. Following the direction of Captain Salt's eyes, he descried a party of four horsemen about half a mile behind them advancing down this road at a steady trot. The Captain had paused in his whistling—which had been pretty continuous all day—and was regarding these horsemen with great interest.

"I do not like them," he said reflectively, and spoke a few words to the steersman, who glanced back over his shoulder.

"You have met them before?" Tristram inquired.

"Not that I know of. Nevertheless, I do not like them."

Tristram thought this odd, for it was impossible at that distance to descry the features of the riders.

"We will go below," his father announced, rising in a leisurely manner.

They did so, and stood by the cabin-door, so that their forms were hidden while they could see perfectly all that passed on the bank. The four horsemen drew near and trotted by at the

same pace without seeming to turn their heads towards the canal. Two rode horses of a dark bay colour, the third a dapple grey, and the fourth a sorrel. As soon as they had passed out of sight, Captain Salt ascended to the deck again and entered into a long conversation in Dutch with the fat boatman. As this did not amuse Tristram any more than the windmills of which the scenery was mainly composed, he remained below, and, stretching himself again on the bench, began to dream of Sophia.

Three hours later he awoke, said his prayers, and was preparing to go to sleep again, when his father entered the cabin.

"Hullo! What are you doing?"

"I was just thanking heaven, which, against my inclinations, makes our journey a slow one."

"You do not wish to reach home in a hurry?"

"On the contrary, I desire it ardently. But having remarked that whenever I travel fast I am either sea-sick or jolted raw, I feel grateful for every restraint put upon my ardour."

"In that case I almost fear to announce that we shall move faster to-morrow."

"I am willing to be coerced," said Tristram, and dropped off again.

It was but an hour after dawn when his father aroused him. The boat lay moored by a

little quay, beyond which his eye travelled to clusters of red roofs glowing in the easterly sunshine, and a dominant spire, the weathercock of which dazzled the eye with its brightness. The town was just waking up, as could be perceived from the blue wreaths of smoke that poured out of the chimneys.

Captain Salt was in an evident hurry. Without giving Tristram time to wash in the fore-cabin, he hustled him on shore and up a narrow street to an inn, over the archway of which hung the sign of a White Lamb with a flag between its fore-legs. Here they rang a bell, and were admitted after ten minutes by a sleepy chambermaid, who led them upstairs to a low-browed sitting-room facing the street, as they perceived when she drew back the shutters. At the back of this room lay two bedchambers; and Tristram withdrew into the nearer, while his father ordered breakfast.

It happened that these two bedrooms overlooked a broad court or stable-yard behind the White Lamb. Captain Salt, having given his instructions, retired, whistling cheerfully, to perform his toilet. He was in the best of spirits, and broke now and again into snatches of song, which he trolled out in a tenor voice of great richness and flexibility. Tristram listened in

admiration on the other side of the partition. The songs were those of Tom d'Urfey and his imitators, and dealt in a strain of easy sentimentality with hay-rakes, milking-pails, and all the apparatus of a country life as etherealised by a cockney fancy; but the Captain sang with such a gusto, such bravura, and such an appealing tremolo in the pathetic passages, that you might have mistaken the splashing of water in his basin, as he broke off to wash his face, for tears of uncontrollable regret that he had not been born a "swain" (as he put it). Suddenly, however, one of his roulades ceased with more abruptness than usual, and the enchanted Tristram waited in vain for the ditty to be resumed. The fact was that Captain Salt had glanced out of window, and seen at a stable-door across the court a man stooping, with his back to the inn, and washing down the legs of a dark bay horse.

The Captain contemplated this group for a moment; then, hastily donning his coat and turning into the parlour, looked out upon the street.

Immediately under the signboard of the White Lamb, and before the front door, stood a couple of men, who chatted as they passed a tankard of beer to each other. Captain Salt could not see their faces owing to the extreme

width of their hat-brims. But he turned a shade paler, and, drawing back from the window, stepped to the door, which opened upon the landing. Moving softly to the balusters, he peered over. Directly beneath him, at the foot of the stairs, sat yet another man in a broad-brimmed hat, who was engaged very tranquilly in polishing a pistol with an oily rag. The barrel glimmered in the light that shone down the well of the staircase from a skylight above Captain Salt's head.

He retired to the parlour again, and, after trying the lock of the door, walked to and fro in deep thought for awhile. Then, from the bedroom, he fetched his sword and belt, with the two pistols which he had carried throughout the journey. He was examining the priming of these very narrowly when Tristram appeared, red and glowing from his ablutions. Almost at the same instant footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. The Captain went quickly to the door, pistol in hand.

It was only the waitress, however, with the tray containing their breakfast. He told her to set it down, looked at the tray, and, announcing that he was hungrier than he had imagined, desired her to bring up a ham, another loaf, and four bottles of wine. Tristram stared.

"You seem puzzled, my son."

"It is my turn again. Let me remind you that, two days ago, you marvelled at my appetite."

"But this has to last us for a whole day, and perhaps longer."

"Are we not, then, to proceed further to-day?"

"I doubt if we can."

"Decidedly this journey gets slower and slower."

The waitress came back with the additional provisions, and set them on the table. As soon as she was gone Captain Salt locked the door.

"Why is that?"

"Merely that I don't wish to be interrupted."

They ate their breakfast in silence. Tristram, as soon as it was over, rose, and, strolling across the room, was about to gaze out upon the street, when his father begged him to come away from the window.

"Why?"

"My son, you should obey your father without questioning," the Captain answered somewhat tartly.

"Forgive me."

Tristram had been taught to obey, but,

considering the wide views for which this country was notorious, he began to reflect with astonishment on the small amount he was able to see. Also he remarked, as the morning wore on, that his father was perpetually at one window or another, moving from parlour to bedroom and back, and scanning now the street, now the stable-yard, yet always with a certain amount of caution. Captain Salt, indeed, was gradually working himself into a state of restless irritation. The man in the stable-yard groomed away at the four horses, one after another, saddled them, led them back to the stable again, then composed himself to sleep on the stool outside the stable-door, with a straw in his mouth and his hat-brim well over his eyes. The others still lounged in the sunshine before the inn-door. He could hear the sound of their voices and occasional laughter, but not the words of their conversation.

It was about six in the evening when the Captain was struck with an idea. At first it staggered him a little: then he thought it over and looked at it from several sides. Each time he reviewed the plan he got rid of a scruple or two, and by degrees began to like it exceedingly. His restlessness diminished, and in the end he became quite still.

Tristram, yawning before the fire, glanced up and found his father's eyes fixed upon him.

"My company wearies you, dear lad?"

The dear lad disclaimed weariness. But Captain Salt advanced, sighed, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Yes, Tristram; let us not deceive ourselves. I have done you a wrong, for which you must forgive me. I hoped, by delaying your return and keeping you near me—I hoped that perhaps——" Here he sighed again, and appeared to struggle with an inward grief. "Do not make it hard for me by bearing malice," he implored, breaking off his explanation.

"I don't quite understand. Are you telling me that you have kept me here unnecessarily?"

"Alas! my boy—I hoped that your affection for me might grow with this opportunity, as mine has grown for you."

Tristram thought that to spend a morning in pacing from one window to another was an odd way of encouraging affection; but he merely answered—

"My dear father, I have a confession to make."

"A confession?"

"One that will not only explain my eagerness to get home, but also will, I trust, soothe your disappointment. The fact is, I am in love."

"Oh! that certainly alters matters. With whom?"

"With Sophia."

"Who is Sophia?"

"She is Captain Runacles' only daughter, and lives on the other side of our hedge."

"My dear lad, why did you not tell me this? Detain you! No. You shall fly on the wings of the wind. We will set out this very afternoon on the swiftest horses this inn can furnish.

Tristram winced. "There are limits even to a lover's zeal," he murmured.

"No, no. Ah, my boy! I, too, have been in love—I can find the key to your feelings by searching my memory. May you be happier than I!"

He passed the back of his hand across his eyes and continued more cheerfully, hilariously almost—

"But away with an old man's memories! I was young, then, and ardent as you. Nay, as I look upon you I see my very self reflected across a score of sorrowful years. We are extraordinarily alike, Tristram. Stand up and measure with me, back to back."

They did so. The Captain found himself the taller by a mere shade.

"It is the wig," he said. "Come, twist up

your natural hair and let me see you in this wig."

Tristram obeyed, and his father fell back in astonishment. "It is extraordinary!"

"Certainly I perceive the likeness," admitted Tristram, contemplating himself in the mirror that hung above the mantel-piece.

"It is nothing to what could be produced by the merest touch or two of art. Give me five minutes, and I warrant you shall deceive the waitress here."

He drew the curtain, took down a candle from the mantel-shelf, lit it, and set it on the table; then, picking up the cork of an empty bottle, held it to the flame for two seconds or so, and began to operate on his son's face.

"Ah!" he said, "to think that each wrinkle, each line, that I copy with a piece of cork has been traced in the original by a separate sorrow! Tristram, your presence makes me young again, young and childish. And in return I make you old—a pretty recompense!"

Tristram, whose nature was profoundly serious, stood up very stiff and blinked at the hand which wandered over his face, touching it here and there as softly as with a feather.

"Are we not wasting time?" he protested.

"Not at all: and to prove it, I am about to send you downstairs to order horses. It is wonderful! I wager the people of the inn shall not know you. Order a couple of fleet horses to be waiting in an hour from now: that will give us plenty of time to reach Nieupoort, and take a night's rest before sailing to-morrow. Here, kick off those clumsy boots and take mine; also my cloak here, and sword. Your breeches and stockings will do. Afterwards you can stroll out into the town, if you will, and purchase a keepsake for Sophia. I, myself, will buy a ring at Nieupoort for you to fit upon her pretty finger, if you succeed in tricking the folk below-stairs. Farewell, my son, and God bless you!—only, be back within the hour."

As the door closed upon Tristram, Captain Salt advanced to the key-hole and listened.

"A sound skin," he muttered to himself, "is better than a dull son. Moreover, at the worst he'll be taken back to the Hague, and there the Earl will keep him from me." He examined his pistols for a moment, opened the door softly, and, creeping out on the landing, began to listen with all his ears.

Meanwhile our hero marched downstairs, and, encountering the waitress in the passage below, gave the order for the horses. The

waitress summoned a lethargic, round-bellied man from an inner parlour, who bowed as well as his waist would let him, and straddled out to the stables to repeat the order. Somewhat pleased to find he had not been recognised, Tristram sauntered up the dusky passage and forth at the front door. As he passed out leisurably, he took careless note of a party of three men seated a few paces to the right of the door, around a rough wooden table. On the other hand, the effect of his exit upon this party was extraordinary. For a moment they gazed after him, their faces expressing sheer amazement. Then they whispered together and stared again. Finally all three stood on their legs and buckled on their sword-belts. Two of them started off to follow Tristram, who had by this time reached the street corner, and was gazing up at the house fronts on each hand with rapt interest. The third man waited until they had gone a dozen yards, and then blew a whistle. In less than half a minute he was joined by the man from the stable-yard, and, after a short colloquy, this pair also linked arms and strolled up the street.

It was drawing towards sunset, and lights began to appear in several of the houses as Tristram passed along. The few foot-passengers

in the street wished him "Good-night" in the Dutch tongue, and he answered their salutations amiably in English, guessing the goodwill in their voices. He was greatly pleased, also, by the number of villas and small gardens that diversified the houses of business, each with a painted summer-house overtopping the wall, and a painted motto on the gate. He longed to explore these gardens, and take home to Harwich some report of the famous Dutch tulip-beds on which Captain Barker was perpetually descanting. A row of these garden-walls enticed him down a street to the right and out towards the suburbs, where the prospect at the end of the road was closed by a long line of wind-mills.

All this while he had been sauntering along at the idlest pace, with a score of pauses. Suddenly he bethought him that it must be time to return, and was about to do so when his eye was caught by a little shop on the other side of the road. He could not read the inscription above it; but the window was crowded with bulbs and roots of all kinds, and bags of seed in small stacks. He crossed the road and entered the low door, meaning to buy a present for Sophia, whom for the last half an hour he had completely forgotten.

The proprietor of the shop sat inside behind

a low counter, reading a book by the light of a defective oil-lamp, the smoke of which had smeared the rafters in a large, irregular circle. He was a little, wizened man, with a pair of horn spectacles, which he pushed high upon his brow as his customer entered.

"Since my father has engaged to buy Sophia a ring," said Tristram to himself, "I will get her a tulip. We will sit hand in hand and watch it unfold."

The prospect so engaged his fancy that he entered and began a sentence in excellent English. The shopman replied by shaking his head and uttering a few unintelligible words.

This was dashing. Tristram cast about for a few seconds, and began again in dog-Latin, a tongue which he had acquired in order to read the herbals to Captain Barker on winter evenings. To his delight the little man answered him promptly. Within a minute they were charmed with each other; within two, they had the highest opinion of each other; within ten, the counter was heaped with trays of the rarest bulbs, insomuch that Tristram found a grave difficulty in choosing that which should give the greatest pleasure to his Sophia. But, alas! in changing clothes with his son, Captain Salt had found it unnecessary to change breeches. Tristram

put a hand into his pocket and discovered that it contained one coin only—the shilling with which he had been presented when forcibly enlisted in his Majesty's Coldstream Guards.

The Latin of the enthusiastic shopman was becoming almost Ciceronian, when Tristram pulled out the coin, and, holding it under his nose, briefly stated the case. Then the wizened face fell a full inch, and the eloquent voice broke off to explain that an English shilling, though doubtless a valid tender in England, was not worth more than a stiver, if that, to a Dutch tradesman.

Tristram apologised, adding that, if the shopman had a pennyworth of any kind of seed, he would purchase it as a small reparation for his intrusion on the time of so learned a man.

The shopman took the shilling and tossed upon the counter a packet of peppercress seed.

Our hero pocketed it, and was leaving the shop; but paused on the threshold and began to renew his apologies.

The little man had picked up his book again, and turned a deaf ear.

Tristram stepped out into the street. As he did so a hand was laid on his arm, and a voice said in good English—

"I arrest you in the name of King William!"

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIBULATIONS OF TRISTRAM.

"I THINK there must be some mistake," said Tristram, as he turned in surprise and saw a tall man of soldierly presence, with three stalwart comrades immediately behind him.

"No mistake at all," said the tall man, with conviction. "My orders are to arrest and convey you back to the Hague."

"But I am about to leave Holland, and this will cause me considerable delay."

"Undoubtedly."

"In that case," Tristram replied, springing back a pace and whipping out his sword, "I must decline to follow you."

"Bah! This is folly."

"On the contrary, it is the conclusion of a valid syllogism which I will explain to you if you have time."

"Seize him!" was the only answer. The four men drew their swords and rushed forward together. Perceiving that he must be skewered against the shop-door if he awaited their onset, Tristram contented himself with disarming his

foremost assailant; then, springing wildly back on his left heel, he spun round and began to run down the street for dear life.

His movement had been so sudden that he gained a dozen yards before his enemies recovered from their surprise and set off in pursuit. Sword in hand, Tristram flew along the causeway, under the high garden-walls, for the open country and the windmills ahead. He heard the feet pounding after him, but luckily did not look behind. Therefore he was ignorant that his leading pursuer carried a brace of pistols in his belt and was pulling one out as he ran.

It was so, however; and in half a minute the pistol cracked out behind him—as it seemed, at the very back of his ear.

He sped on nevertheless, not knowing if he were wounded or not, but very wisely deciding that this was the surest way to find out.

As it happened, this pistol-shot proved of the greatest service to him. For an inquisitive burgher, hearing the outcries along the road, had popped his head out of his garden door at the very moment that Tristram whizzed by, followed by the detonation. The burgher, too, was uncertain about the bullet, but determined on the instant to take the gloomier view. He, therefore,

fell across the pavement on his stomach and bellowed.

The distraction was so sudden that two of the pursuers tripped over his prostrate form and fell headlong. Their swords clanged on the cobbles. With the clang there mingled the sound of a muffled explosion.

"Curse the idiot! You've killed him, Dick."

The pair picked themselves up as their comrades leapt past them. Dick snatched up his second pistol, and resumed the pursuit without troubling his head about the burgher.

The burgher picked himself up and extracted the ball—from the folds of his voluminous breeches. Then he went indoors for ointment and plaster, the flame of the powder having scorched him severely. Later, he had the bent guelder (which had diverted the bullet) fastened to a little gold chain, and his wife wore it always on the front of her bodice. Finally it became an heirloom in a thriving Dutch family.

But he was a very slow man, and all this took a considerable time. Meanwhile we have left Tristram running, about thirty yards ahead of his foremost enemy.

He gained the end of the quiet suburb, still maintaining his distance, and scanned the landscape in front. Evening was descending fast.

To his right he saw the waters of a broad canal glimmering under the grey sky. Straight before him the high-road ran, without so much as a tree to shelter him, for miles. On the horizon a score of windmills waved their arms like beckoning ghosts. He was a good swimmer. It flashed upon him that his one hope was to make for the canal, and strike for the further bank. There was a reasonable chance of shaking off one or more of his pursuers by this device.

He leapt the narrow ditch that ran parallel with the road, and began to bear across the green meadows in a line which verged towards the canal bank, at an angle sufficiently acute to prevent his foes from intercepting him by a short cut. By their shouts he judged that his guess was fairly correct, and the prospect of having to swim the canal daunted them somewhat. He looked over his shoulder. The pace had told upon three of them, but one man had actually gained on him, and could not be more than twenty strides behind.

"I shall have to settle with this fellow," he thought. "He is going to catch me up before I reach the bank."

His first wind was failing him, and his heart began to thump against his ribs. He spied a beaten path at this point, that trended across

the meadow at a blunter angle than the one he was following. Almost unconsciously he began to reason as follows—

"A beaten path is usually the shortest cut: also, to follow it is usually to escape the risk of meeting unforeseen obstacles. But if I change the angle at which I am running for one more obtuse, I give my pursuer the advantage of ten yards or so. Yes; but I shorten the distance to be covered, and, moreover, this is a long-distance man, and he is wearing me down."

Though this process of reasoning appeared to him deliberate enough, in point of fact he had worked it out and put the conclusion into practice in a couple of bounds. As he darted aside and along the footpath he could hear the momentary break in his antagonist's stride.

Tristram had hardly turned into this foot-path, however, before he saw the occasion of it. Just before him lay a plank, and beneath the plank a sunken dyke, dividing the meadow so unexpectedly that at fifty yards' distance the green lips seemed to meet in one continuou stretch of turf. And yet the dyke was full forty feet wide. He leapt on to the swaying bridge and across to the further edge, almost without a glance at the sluggish black water under his feet.

It is probable that his sudden weight jolted the plank out of its position. For hardly was he safe on the turf again when he heard a sharp cry. Throwing a look behind, he saw his pursuer totter, clutch at the slipping timber, and, still clutching at it, turn a somersault and disappear.

Tristram ran on. Then a series of shouts rang in his ear, and he looked behind again. The other three men had come up, and were running aimlessly to and fro upon the further bank. From the pit at their feet rose a gurgling and heart-rending appeal for help. It was plain the poor fellow was drowning, and equally plain that his comrades could not swim. Tristram took a couple of strides, and halted. Then he faced about and walked back towards the dyke, his heart still knocking against his ribs.

"Help! help!" resounded from the depths of the dyke.

"Gentlemen," said Tristram, "are you aware that your comrade is perishing?"

They stared at him helplessly. Without more to-do he slipped off his shoes, and sliding down the bank, flung himself forward into the icy water. In two strokes he was able to grasp the drowning man by the collar and began to tug him towards the bank.

But it appeared that the fellow had other views on the right method of being saved: for, casting his arms about Tristram's neck and wreathing them tightly, he not only resisted all efforts to drag him ashore, but begun to throttle his rescuer. In the struggle both went under.

As the water closed over them, the drowning man relaxed his hold a little, and Tristram, breaking free, rose to the surface coughing and spouting like a whale. Another moment, and a hand appeared above the water, its fingers hooked like a bird's talons. This grisly appeal determined Tristram to make another attempt. He kicked out, seized the uplifted arm just around the wrist, and with half a dozen fierce strokes managed to gain the bank at the feet of his enemies. While he dug a hand into the soft mud and paused for a moment to shift his hold and draw breath, one of the three unclasped a leathern belt and dangled it over the brink. Tristram reached out, caught it by the buckle, and was helped up with his burden. Two pairs of strong arms grasped and pulled him forward.

"Turn him—on his face and let the water—run out; then on his back—give him air," he gasped, and with that fainted clean away on the green turf.

When his senses came back, the three men were bending over him.

"Where is the other one?" he asked feebly.

"Oh, Dick's all right." And, indeed, Dick was sitting up a few paces off, and coughing violently.

"But look here, you've played us a pretty trick!" the voice went on.

Tristram did not know that his wig had been lost in the struggle, or that the burnt cork which Captain Salt had applied was now running across his face in a vague smear. He had forgotten all about his disguise.

"I was thinking," he answered simply, "that you might give me the start I held before this happened. Fifteen yards, gentlemen, is as near as I can guess it. Don't you think that would be fair?"

"But why should we chase you at all?"

"Upon my word, sirs, *I* don't know. I took it for granted that you must have some motive."

"So we had; but it appears that you are not Captain Salt."

"That is certain. A man cannot well be his own father."

"But you are disguised to resemble him."

"Ah! I remember. It was a fancy of his to dress me thus, an hour back. But stop a minute

—I begin to perceive. You were after my father?"

"Yes, to arrest him. The King suspects him of carrying treasonable papers."

As the full treachery of his father's conduct began to dawn upon Tristram, they heard the clatter of hoofs on the road at their back, and turned. A thin moon hung in the twilight sky. It was just that hour before dark when the landscape looks flat to the eye, and forms at a little distance grow confused in outline. Yet they could see the horseman plainly enough to recognise him. It was Captain Salt who flew past, well out of pistol-shot, and headed southwards at a stretch-gallop, his hands down and his shoulders bent as he rode.

"Devil seize him if he hasn't got my mare!" roared the man Dick, forgetting his cough and leaping to his feet. "I can tell the sorrel a mile away!"

Then followed a dismayed silence as they watched the escaping rider.

"She's the best nag of the four, too," one of the men muttered gloomily.

"Boys," said the fellow who had first arrested Tristram, "he's done us for a certainty. In an hour or two he'll reach the French outposts. We must go back and patch up the best story

we can find. Young man," he added, turning sharply, "I'd like to be certain you're as big a fool as you make out. Where d'ye come from, and where are ye bound for?"

Tristram told his story ingenuously enough.

"We'll have to search you."

They searched him and found a sealed packet.

"What is this?"

"Pepper-cress seed."

"Pepper-cress be damned!" was the only comment.

However, when the packet was opened it was found that he spoke the truth.

"Well, we can't take you along with us, or we shall have to tell his Majesty the truth, which is something more improbable than I care to risk. Moreover, you've saved a comrade——"

"And many thanks for it, my lad," Dick added, shaking Tristram by the hand.

"Therefore you're free to go. The question is, Where do you want to go?"

"Harwich."

"Harwich is a long way; and you've lost your passport. However, there's a chance you may find a boat on the coast to smuggle you over. Cross the canal yonder, and bear away to the west. There's a road 'll take you to

Nieupoort. But first you'll have to pass this cursed dyke, unless you care to follow us back to the town and walk round."

"Thank you, no; I'll push on. I've crossed the dyke twice already this evening, and a second wetting won't matter much. Besides, I see my sword and shoes lying on the other bank."

He said farewell, slid down into the dyke again, and swam across. Then, regaining his property, he turned, called back another "Good-night!" and bore resolutely across the meadow, the water squishing in his shoes at every step. The one purpose in his head was to reach the coast. He was young and sick of heart, but his gentle mind abhorred from considering his father's baseness. He thought only of home and Sophia.

In a minute or two he began to run, for the night air searched his sodden clothes and chilled him. The sky was starless, too, but he saw the dull gleam of the canal, and made for it. Then he followed the tow-path southward for half a mile, and came to a bridge, and crossing it, found himself upon a firm high-road leading (as it seemed) straight towards the west, for it certainly diverged from the canal at something like a right angle. Unfortunately, Tristram could not see in the gloom that the canal here took a sharp

bend inland, and in consequence he tramped on with his face set almost due south, nothing doubting of his direction, but hoping, as each hour passed, that the next would bring him within sound of the surf. The road ran straight for mile after mile. Now and again he passed a small cabaret brightly lit and merry with a noise of talk and laughter that warmed his heart for a moment. In the stretches of darkness between he met one or two wayfarers, who wished him "Good night" in gruff voices and passed on. Not understanding what they said, he made no reply, but pushed forward briskly, breaking into a run whenever the cold began to creep upon him. By-and-by the road was completely deserted. The lights no longer shone from the lower floors of the wayside cottages, but, after lingering for a while in the bedroom windows, vanished altogether. The whole country slept. Then followed hour after hour of dogged walking. A thick haze encircled the moon, and under it a denser exhalation began to creep up from the sodden land. In the silence the fog gathered till it seemed to bar the way like a regiment of white ghosts, wavering and closing its ranks as the wind stirred over the levels. This wind breathed on his right cheek steadily. He never guessed that it came from the sea, nor

remembered that when he ran towards the canal it had been blowing full in his face.

It was in the chilliest hour—the one before dawn—that a voice suddenly called out from the fog ahead :—

"Qui va là?"

Tristram halted, then took another step forward in some uncertainty.

The voice repeated its challenge in an angrier tone; and this time our hero stood stock-still. The misfortune was that he knew not a word of the French language.

Once more the voice called. Then a trigger clicked, a yellow flare leapt out on the fog with a roar, and something sang by Tristram's ear. He jumped off the road and pelted across the meadow to his right. A second shot was sent after him, but this time very wide of its mark. Then, as it seemed, at his very feet a dozen black forms rose out of the earth. He tripped over one and went floundering on to his nose. As his hands touched the ground, a score of bright sparks flew up and were extinguished. With a cry of pain he rolled upon his back, and was at once pinned to the ground by a dozen firm hands.

He had blundered full-tilt across the embers of a French camp-fire.

A lantern was lit and thrust close to his face. He blinked painfully for a moment or two, and then perceived that he lay within a circle of fierce, grey-coated soldiers, who were putting him a score of questions in a tongue which, he felt sure, it would take him a year to master.

He endeavoured to say so.

"Ar-r-rh!" exclaimed one of the soldiers, spitting contemptuously, "C'est un Anglais."

"Espion!"

"J'en réponds." He gave an order, and in a trice Tristram's wrists were strapped together with a handkerchief. Then he was heaved up on his feet, and a couple of men took him, each by an arm. They were about to march him off, when a voice hailed them, and up rode a general officer, with two dragoons cantering behind him for escort.

"Qu'y a-t-il, mes enfants?" He had plainly been disturbed by the noise of the firing.

The soldiers murmured, "M. de Soisson!" and presented arms. Then they explained matters, and thrust Tristram forward, holding the lantern uncomfortably near his face.

M. de Soisson began an interrogatory in good French. As the prisoner shook his head, he harked back and repeated his questions in extremely bad English. Tristram answered them

truthfully, which had the effect of raising disbelief in M. de Soisson's breast. After ten minutes this disbelief grew to such an extent that the peppery officer turned to the sergeant and ordered Tristram to be taken off to the barn where the deserters were kept under guard.

This barn lay a mile to the rear, across half-a-dozen meadows, over which Tristram was hurried at a quick trot, with the point of a bayonet at his back to discountenance delay. On arriving at the building he was held while the sergeant unlocked the door. Then he was kicked into inner darkness. He stumbled over the legs of a man who cursed him volubly, and dropped on to a heap of straw. Within ten minutes he was asleep, utterly worn out both in body and mind.

Three hours passed, and then the door of the barn was flung open and another sergeant appeared with a squad of soldiers at his back. He strode through the barn, kicking the sleepers, among whom was our hero. Tristram sat up and rubbed his eyes. He was one of at least three dozen poor wretches, hollow-eyed, lean of cheek, and shivering with famine, whom the sergeant proceeded to drive into a small crowd near the entrance, shouting an order which was repeated outside. Six men appeared, each

carrying a load of chains. With these he fastened his prisoners together, two and two, by the wrist and ankle, and marched them out into the open air.

Outside, the rain was descending sullenly, and in this downpour the captives waited for a mortal hour. Then three men came along, bearing trays heaped up with thick hunks of brown bread. A hunk was doled out to each of the gang, and Tristram ate his portion greedily, slaking his thirst afterwards by sucking at the sleeve of his cloak. He had hardly done when the sergeant gave the word to march.

That day they tramped steadily till sunset, when they reached the town of Courtrai, and were halted on the outskirts. Here they remained for half an hour in the road while the sergeant sought for quarters. Tristram's comrade—that is to say, the man who was attached to him by the wrist and ankle—was sulky and extremely dejected. As for Tristram, his very soul shuddered as he looked back upon the journey. He was wet to the skin and aching; his teeth chattered with an ague; his legs were so weary that he could scarcely drag them along. But worse than the shiverings, the weariness, and the weight of his fetters, were the revolting sights he had witnessed along the road—men

dropping with hunger and faintness, kicked to their feet again, prodded with bayonets till the blood ran, knouted with a thick whip if they broke step, jeered at when they shrieked (as some did) for mercy. There was worse to come, and he alone of all the gang was ignorant of it. Very merciful was the confusion of tongues which hid that knowledge from him for a few hours.

At length they were marched back half a mile and turned into a barn, narrower than their shelter of the previous night. Nor was there any straw in it. They slept on the hard bricks, pillowing their heads on each other's legs, or lay awake and listened to each other's moans. Two sentries with loaded muskets kept guard by the door, and looked in whenever a chain clanked or some unfortunate began to rave in his sleep. Before morning a third of the gang was down with rheumatic fever or typhus. At six o'clock the sergeant entered and examined them. Then he retired, and came back in another hour with a covered wagon, into which the sick were hoisted and packed like herrings. All who had power to move their legs were afterwards turned out and treated to a pound and a-half of the "King's bread" and a drink of water before starting. Tristram was one of these. The fever had relieved him of his companion, and

this day he marched with more comfort, albeit his wrists were bound together and a rope of ten yards or more tied him by the waist to a couple of fettered deserters in front.

The weather had lifted somewhat, but the roads were still heavy, and their pace was regulated by the covered waggon, which seemed to loiter malevolently, as if to get every possible jolt out of the rutted highway. With every jolt came a scream from one or more of the sick men inside. Some, however, were past screaming, and babbled continuously in high delirium; and the ceaseless, monotonous talk of these tortured Tristram's ears from Courtrai to Lille.

They reached Lille long after dark, and were driven through the streets, between the bright windows of happier men, to the gloomy tower of Saint Pierre, that at this time was set apart for galley-slaves. On entering the prison they were marshalled in a long corridor, where a couple of gaolers searched them all over. Nothing was found on Tristram but his packet of pepper-cress seed, which the searchers obligingly returned. As soon as this ceremony was over, all who were not broken with fever were led up two flights of stone stairs. An iron door was opened, and the sound of heavy snoring struck their ears. Inside, they perceived by the

light of the gaoler's lantern a dozen figures stretched on straw pallets, and between the sleepers as many more empty couches, for which the new-comers were left to scramble. Tristram secured one as the door clanged and left them in pitch-black night, but gave it up to a pitiful wretch who crept near and, kissing his hand, implored leave to share it. Curling himself up upon the bare floor, he was quickly asleep and dreaming of Sophia.

A hand shook his shoulder and aroused him.

Looking up, he saw a couple of villainous faces, which he did not recognise as belonging to the gang he had been walking with for two days. It was morning, as he could perceive by the light that was strained through a cobwebbed grating over his head.

The two men demanded if he wished to be tossed in a blanket. Tristram, not understanding, shook his head. They thereupon demanded money and began to threaten. Tristram hit one violently in the eye, and, catching the other by the throat, pounded his head against the wall of the dungeon. He was surprised at the strength left in him, and also at a fury which he had never felt before in his life. A few of the prisoners roused themselves listlessly and laughed. He kicked the two fellows out of the way and lay down again.

Later in the morning he witnessed the game they had meant to play with him. One of his comrades, a wretched boy, blue with starvation, denied them money, for the simple reason that he had none in his pocket. Four of the old hands thereupon produced a filthy counterpane of coarse cloth and stretched their victim upon it. Then each took a corner, and, raising it as high as they could reach, they let the counterpane fall on the stone flooring with a horrible thud. Tristram leapt forward indignantly and caught one of these ruffians a blow on the back of the neck that sent him down like an ox. Upon this the other three dropped their sport and fell upon him, like angry women, tooth and nail. Nobody interfered. He was driven back against the wall, where he leant, just contriving to keep his adversaries at arm's length with his fists, and feeling, now that the first spurt of wrath had left him, that within three minutes he must faint from very hunger and weakness.

There is no knowing how the affair would have ended had not the door been thrown open at this moment. A couple of priests advanced between the files of prisoners, who sat up at once and began to howl out a dismal litany at the top of their lungs. Tristram's assailants left him hurriedly, and, shrinking back to their

pallets, began to lift their voices with the rest. The noise was like that of a cat's battle, and the priests marched to and fro while it continued, smiling to left and right and exhorting the poor devils to an increase of fervour. One of them spied Tristram and whispered to his brother; and the pair seemed about to address him, when three gaolers entered with large trays, bearing the prisoners' breakfasts. The litany ceased, and the singers glanced at these trays with greedy eyes.

It proved to be the best meal that Tristram had swallowed since his misfortunes began, there being a pint of soup to each man in addition to the usual brown bread. After devouring it, Tristram sat with his back to the wall, wondering if the three ruffians would renew their attack; but they appeared to have forgotten their resentment, and even his presence. Some of his fellow-miserables fell to chatting; others to plaiting ropes out of the straw on which they lay; while some occupied themselves in keeping a look-out for the rats that swarmed everywhere and stole out in the dim light to gnaw the pieces of bread which the prisoners saved and hid away for future use.

About four in the afternoon the great door was flung open again and the chief gaoler

appeared, with four turnkeys and the soldiers of the prison guard, all armed to the teeth with pistols, swords and bayonets. Their object, it turned out, was to examine the four walls and the floor very minutely, to see if the prisoners were making any holes or planning any attempt to escape. They spent a full half an hour in routing out the prisoners and searching high and low with their lanterns, using great roughness and the most abominable talk. Tristram watched their movements for some time, but at length curled himself up in his corner, which had already been explored. He was closing his eyes, and putting a finger in each ear to shut out the riot, when a smart blow descended across his thighs.

One of the soldiers was belabouring him with the flat of a sword, as a hint to stand up.

Tristram did so, and now observed that a dozen of the men with whom he had marched during the two previous days were collected in a little group by the door. He was taken by the arms and hustled forward to join them. As he came close and could see their faces in the dingy twilight, he saw also that, though big, strapping fellows, the most of them were weeping, and shivering like conies in a trap.

He was still wondering at the cause of their

agitation when the gaoler reopened the door and they were marched out, down the stone stairs, then sharply to the right and along a narrow corridor. A lamp flickered at the further end, over a small door studded with iron nails; and before this door another small company of soldiers was drawn up in two rows of six, with their backs to either wall of the corridor. Between them the prisoners were forced to defile, still cringing and weeping, as the small door opened and they passed into the chamber beyond.

And now for the first time Tristram felt thoroughly alarmed. The chamber was narrow and lofty, and without any window that he could perceive. But just now it was full of a red light that poured out through the eyes of a charcoal brazier in the far corner. Two grim figures in leathern aprons stood over this brazier, with the glare on their brutal faces—the one puffing with a pair of bellows till the room was filled with suffocating vapours, the other diving a handful of irons into the glowing centre, wherein five or six already glowed at a red heat.

Beside them, and watching these operations with a business-like air, stood a gentleman in a handsome suit and plumed hat.

"Première fournée!" announced the sergeant

in a loud tone, marshalling the prisoners along the wall. Four or five of them had by this time broken out into loud sobs and cries for mercy. The gentleman scarcely turned his head, but continued to watch the heating of the irons. At length, satisfied that all was ready, he turned and walked in front of the line, examining each prisoner attentively with an absolutely impassive face.

Coming to Tristram—who by this time was committing his fate to heaven—he paused for a moment and, beckoning the sergeant, put a question or two. The sergeant shrugged his shoulders and spread out both palms apologetically. Then the gentleman addressed a sentence to Tristram, and receiving no answer but a shake of the head, cast about for a moment and began again in English.

"You are Englishman?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not French deserter?"

"Certainly not."

"Then what the devil you do here?"

This was a question that seemed to require a deal of answering. While Tristram was perpending how best to begin, his interrogator spoke again—

"Speak out. I am M. de Lambertie, Grand

Provost of Flanders. You had better speak me the truth."

Our hero began a recital of his woes, condensing as well as he could. After a minute, M. de Lambertie interrupted him.

"I beg your pardon. I speak the English ver' well; but *mordieu* if I can comprehend a word as you speak it! *Tenez donc*—You are a spy?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, well," said the Grand Provost, altogether gravelled, "you *must* be something—come."

He called the sergeant again; who plainly could give no information, and was quite as plainly surprised that any fuss should be made over an affair so trivial. Indeed, the sergeant ventured to suggest that Tristram should be branded on the off-chance of its turning out for his good.

"But no," said M. de Lambertie, "I am a man of justice and of logic. It is incredible that a youth who cannot speak a word but English should be a deserter from our Majesty's army. Moreover, I am a physiognomist, and his face is honest. Therefore," concluded the man of logic, "he shall go to the galleys."

This was interpreted to Tristram, who found

the argument fallacious, but fell on his knees and kissed M. de Lambertie's hand.

"Take him away," said the Grand Provost.

He was dragged to his feet and led to the door, followed by the desperate eyes of his comrades. He heard their sobs and outcries renewed above the steady pant of the bellows. Then the door clanged. The soldiers took him upstairs and cast him back into the great dungeon.

The next morning he started in a chain of thirty-five slaves for the galleys at Dunkirk.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GALLEY "L'HEUREUSE."

THE archers, or constables, in charge of the slaves took them through Ypres and Furnes; and, as the distance is about twelve leagues, it was not till the third day that Tristram saw the spires and fortifications of Dunkirk rising against the blue sea. But in that time he learnt much, being tied to a brisk, rotund Burgundian, the cheerfullest of the gang, who had made two campaigns with the English Foot Guards in Turenne's time, and had picked up a smattering of their language. He knew, at any rate, enough English to teach Tristram the rudiments of French on the road, and gave him much information that went far to alter his notions of the world.

Tristram was deeply shocked at the sight of one or two of the men whom he had left in the hands of M. de Lambertie. He now ceased to wonder at the agony of apprehension they had exhibited, and, while compassionating their horrible case, did not forget to thank God for having interposed to save him from a similar fate.

"Ah, yes," said his comrade tranquilly; "they are deserters. Formerly they used to have their noses cut off, as well as their ears; but this was found to breed infection, and now they are merely slit—besides, of course, being branded with the flower-de-luce on either cheek. But what matters their appearance to them, seeing that their sentence is for life?"

Tristram shuddered. "This King of yours," said he, "must be the first-cousin to the devil."

"They are all alike, *mon cher*. What, for instance, has your King done for you? But speak not so loud." He took a few steps in silence, and added: "After all, one must distinguish between crimes. If the poor *faussoniers* are treated to the galleys it is absurd to suppose that nothing worse must befall a deserter."

"What is a *faussonier?*"

"There is one yonder, comrade—that young peasant who walks like a calf and seems to know not whither he is bound. He is condemned because he bought some salt for his young wife, who was ill."

"Is that a crime?"

"It depends where you buy it. You must know, my friend, that in most of the provinces of France salt is very dear. A pint will cost you four francs and a little over. Therefore the

poor cannot afford it for their soup, and some, for lack of it, go fasting most of the week. So they starve and languish and fall sick, as did this young man's wife. But in my native Burgundy—blessed be its name!—and also in the country of Doubs, salt is cheap enough. Now, this young man dwelt close on the frontier of Burgundy—I have seen him times and again at the vintage work—and because he was very fond of his wife, and could not bear to see her die, he ventured across the frontier to buy salt cheaply; and, being taken, he has been condemned to the galleys for six years. In the meantime his wife will perish. But the King's taxes must be paid, else how shall we exterminate his enemies?"

"But," Tristram exclaimed, trembling with indignation, "how can you be cheerful in this fearful land?"

"What! I? Well, I am cheerful, to begin with, because my nose is not slit."

"That appears to me a very slight reason."

"You would not say so if you had run so near it as I."

"Are you a deserter, then?"

"Thanks for your good opinion, comrade! No. I was never guilty of disloyalty to King Lewis. But I killed my wife's mother, *pardieu!* —which the judge seemed to think almost as

vile, till I sent a friend to grease his palm with the last sou of my patrimony. And, by good fortune, it became greasy enough to let me slip out of the worst."

"A murderer!" gasped our innocent youth, drawing away from his side.

"She was talkative," the little man explained, with composure. "But let us converse upon other subjects. Only I must warn you that on board the galleys, whither we are bound, a man can recoil from his neighbour but just so far as his chain allows."

In such converse they beguiled the way, talking low whenever an archer drew near, and whispering together at night until they dropped asleep in the filthy stables where they were packed, their chains secured at either end to the wall, and so tightly that they had barely liberty to lie down, and none to turn, or even stir, in their sleep. By degrees Tristram grew even to like this volatile and disreputable comrade, whose conscience was none of his own growing, but of the laws he lived under.

On reaching Dunkirk, however, they were parted, Tristram being assigned to the galley *L'Heureuse*, while the Burgundian was told off to the *Merveille*, then commanded by the Chevalier de Sainte-Croix.

"You are in luck, comrade," he said, as they parted under the Rice-bank fort, beside the pier; "*L'Heureuse* is the Commodore's galley, and the only one in which a poor devil of a slave has an awning above his head to keep the rain and sun off. Ah, what it is to have six feet of stature and a pair of shoulders!"

It turned out as he said. *L'Heureuse*, commanded by the Commodore de la Pailletine, was the head of a squadron of six galleys then quartered in the port of Dunkirk. But it is necessary here to say a word or two about these strange vessels which the Count de Tourville had recently brought round to the north coast of France from Marseilles and the ports of the Mediterranean. They were narrow craft, ranging from 120 feet to 150 feet long, and from 18 feet to 20 feet by the beam. In the hold they were not more than 7 feet deep; so that, with a full crew on board, the deck stood less than a couple of feet from the water's edge; for the number of men they held was prodigious. The Commodore's galley alone was manned by 336 slaves, and 150 men of all sorts, either officers, soldiers, seamen, or servants. This, however, was the biggest complement of all; for while *L'Heureuse* had fifty-six oars, with six slaves to tug at each, none of the rest carried more than fifty, with

five rowers apiece. The prow of each galley was of iron, pointed like a beak, and so sharp that when rowed at full speed against a hostile ship it was like to sink her, or at least to drive deep and hold on while the boarders poured up and over her side. In addition to this formidable weapon, each carried four guns right forward, besides a heavier piece which was worked on a circular platform amidships, and when not required for service was stowed by the mainmast for ballast. Each galley had two masts, though they were next to useless, for it is easy to see that vessels so laden and open at the decks were fit only for the lightest breezes, and in foul weather must run to harbour for their lives.

Before embarking in the boat which was to take him on board, Tristram was led up to the Rice-bank, where a barber shaved his head, and where he was forced to exchange the suit he wore for a coarse canvas frock, a canvas shirt, and a little jerkin of red serge, sleeveless, and slit on either side up to the arm-holes. The design of this (as a warder explained to him) was to allow his muscles free play, which Tristram pronounced very considerate, repeating this remark when he received a small scarlet cap to keep the cold from his shaven head. He was next offered a porringer of soup, consisting chiefly of oil, with a

dozen lentils floating on the top; and having consumed it, was rowed off to be introduced to his new companions. On considering his circumstances, he found but one which could be called consoling. It was that he had been allowed to retain and stow in his waist-belt his little packet of pepper-cress seed—a favour for which he thanked his persecutors with tears in his eyes.

It happened that his galley was bound that afternoon on a cruise of a few miles along the coast, and indeed was lifting anchor as he was hauled up the side. He had, therefore, but a hasty view of his surroundings before he was chained to his bench, facing the great oar. He saw only a long chamber, crossed by row upon row of white, desperate faces. Down the middle, by the ends of the benches, ran a gangway, along which three overseers paced leisurably, each with a tall, flexible wand in his hand. The stench in the place was overpowering, and Tristram was on the point of swooning when the fellow who was chained beside him growled a word of advice—

"Look sharp and slip your jacket off."

Tristram obeyed without understanding. He saw that all the figures around him were naked to the waist, and therefore pulled off shirt as well as jacket, but not quickly enough to prevent

a stroke, which hissed down on his shoulders and made him set his teeth with anguish. The man beside him uttered a sharp cry. He, too, had felt the cut, or part of it; for the overseer's wand did not discriminate.

The handle of the great oar swung towards Tristram. Noting how his neighbour's hands were laid upon it, and copying his example, he began to tug with the rest, rising from his bench and falling back upon it at each stroke; and at the end of each stroke, where ordinarily a boat's oars rattle briskly against the thole-pins, the time was marked with a loud clash of chains, and often enough with a sharp cry from some poor wretch who had been caught lagging and thwacked across the bare shoulders. The fatigue after a time grew intolerably heavy. While the sun smote down through the awning, the heat of their exercise seemed never to pass up through it, but beat back upon their faces in sickening waves, stopping their breath. Of the world outside their den they could see nothing but a small patch of blue sea beyond the hole in which their oar worked. The sweat poured off their chests and backs in streams, until their waistbands clung to the flesh like soaked sponges. Some began to moan and sob; others to entreat

heaven for a respite, as if God were directing their torture and taking delight in it; others again broke out into frightful imprecations, cursing their Maker and the hour of their birth. And while the oars swung and the chains clashed and the cries redoubled their volume, the three keepers moved imperturbably up and down the gangway, flicking their whips to left and right, and drawing blood with every second stroke. At length, when Tristram's head was reeling and the backs of the bench-full just in front were melting before his eyes and swimming in a blood-red haze, the order was yelled to easy. The men dropped their faces forward on the oars, and rested them there while they panted and coughed, catching the breath again into their heaving bodies. Then one or two began to laugh and utter some poor drolleries; presently the sound spread, and within three minutes the whole pit was full of chatter and uproar. They seemed to forget their miseries even as they wiped the blood off their shoulders.

And now, while the cold wind began to creep underneath the awning and dry the sweat around their loins, Tristram had time to take stock of his companions, and even to ask a question or two of the slave that had spoken to him. They were all stalwart fellows, the

Commodore having the pick of all the *forçats* drafted to his port, and exercising it with some care, because he prided himself on the speed of his vessel. Not a few wore on their cheeks the ghastly red flower-de-luce, which he now knew for the mark of deserters, murderers, and the more flagrant criminals; others, he learned, were condemned for the pettiest thefts, and a large proportion for having no better taste than to belong to the Protestant religion. The man beside him, for instance, was a poor Huguenot from Perigord, who had been caught on the frontier in the act of escaping to a country in which he had a slightly better chance of calling his soul his own. All these were white men; but at the end of each bench, next the gangway, sat a Turk or Moor. These were bought slaves, procured expressly to manage the stroke of the oar, and, for their skill, treated somewhat better than the Christians. They earned the same pay as the soldiers, and were not chained, like other slaves, to the benches, but carried only a ring on the foot as a badge of servitude. Indeed, when not engaged in service, they enjoyed a certain amount of liberty, being allowed to go on shore and trade, purchasing meat for such of the white men as had any money or were willing to earn some by clearing their neighbours' clothes of

vermin—a common trade on board these galleys, where the confined space, the dirt, and profuse sweating at the oar bred all manner of loathsome pests.

It was by degrees that Tristram learnt all this, as during the week that followed he found time to chat with the Huguenot and improve his acquaintance with the French tongue. By night he was provided with a board, a foot and a-half wide, on which to stretch himself; and as he lay pretty far aft, was warned against scratching himself, lest the rattle of his chains should disturb the officers, whose quarters were divided from the slaves' by the thinnest of wooden partitions. By day, indeed, these officers, as well as the chaplain, had the use of the Commodore's room, a fairly spacious chamber in the stern, shaped on the outside like a big cradle, with bulging windows and a couple of lanterns on the taffrail above, that were lit when evening closed in. But at night, or in foul weather, M. de la Pailletine reserved this apartment for his own use.

At six o'clock every morning the slaves were roused up and began their day with prayers, which the chaplain conducted, taking particular care that the Huguenots were hearty in their responses. The Turks—or *Vogue-avants* as they

were called—were never molested on the score of religion; but while Mass was saying were put out of the galley into a long-boat, where they diverted themselves by smoking and talking till the Christians were through with their exercises.

When these were done the daily portion of biscuit—pretty good, though coarse—was doled out to each man, and at ten o'clock a porringer of soup. Also, on days when the galleys were taken for a cruise, each slave received something less than a pint of wine, morning and evening, to keep up his strength. But it must not be imagined from this that their work was light during the rest of the week. When the weather kept them in harbour, all such as knew any useful trade were taken off the galley to the town of Dunkirk, and there set to work under guard, some at the making of new clothes or the repairing of old ones; others at carpentry, plumbing, or shoemaking; others, again, at repairing the fortifications, and so on—thus allowing room for the residue to scrub out the galley, wash down the benches and decks, and set all ship-shape and in order: of which residue Tristram was one, being versed in no trade but that of gardening, for which there seemed to be no demand. But at length, having an eye for colour, he was given a paint-pot and brushes,

slung over the galley's stern, and set to work to touch up the window-frames of the Commodore's cabin. The position was uncomfortable at first, since the board on which he was slung was but eight inches wide, and the galley's stern rose to a considerable height above the water. Looking down, he reflected that, with the heavy chain on his leg, he was safe to drown if he slipped; and in spite of his miserable situation, he had not the least desire to die, being full of trust in Providence and assured that, so long as he lived, there would always be a chance of regaining his beloved Sophia. And pretty soon he grew to delight in the work, not for its own sake alone, but because it separated him for a time from the sight of his companions and their misery. The paint was blue, which reminded him of the Pavilions at home, and he began to throw his soul into the job, with the result that the Commodore expressed much satisfaction with it, and gave him instructions to re-paint the whole of the stern, including the magnificent board with the inscription *L'HEUREUSE* in gilt letters, and the royal arms of France surrounded with decorations in the flamboyant style.

Thus it happened that, one fine morning in the middle of June, he was hanging out over the stern in his usual posture, and, having

finished the letters *L'HEU*, took a look around on the brightness of the day before dipping his brush and starting again. The galley with her five consorts lay in the Royal Basin under the citadel, and a mile in from the open sea, towards which the long line of the pier extended, its tall forts dominating the sand-dunes that stretched away to right and left. The sands shone; the sea was a bright blue, edged with silver where its breakers touched the shore; a clear northerly breeze came sweeping inland and hummed in the galley's rigging as it flew by. From the streets of Dunkirk sounded the cheerful bustle of the morning's business; and as Tristram glanced up at the glistening spire of the Jesuits' Church, its clock struck out eleven o'clock as merrily as if it played a tune.

It was just at this moment, as he turned to dip his brush, that he caught sight of a small boat approaching across the basin. It was rowed by a waterman, and in the stern-sheets there sat a figure the sight of which caused Tristram's heart to stop beating for a moment, and then to resume at a gallop. He caught hold of the rope by which he hung, and looked again.

Beyond a doubt it was his father, Roderick Salt.

Now just as Tristram underwent this shock

of surprise, from a point about three yards above his head another person was watching the boat with some curiosity. This was the Commodore, M. de la Pailletine, who stood on the poop with his feet planted wide and his hands clasped beneath his coat-tails. He was wondering who this visitor could be.

Captain Salt was elegantly dressed, and the cloak thrown back from his broad chest revealed a green suit, thick with gold lace, and a white waistcoat also embroidered with gold. The bullion twinkled in the sunshine as the boat drew near and, crossing under Tristram's dangling heels, dropped alongside the galley. And as it passed, the son, looking straight beneath him, determined in his heart that, bad as his present plight might be, he would endure it rather than trust himself in his father's hands again. The Captain stepped briskly up the ladder and gained the galley's deck. He had given the young man a glance and no more. It was not wonderful that he had failed to recognise in the young *forçat* with the shaven head and rough, stubbly beard the son whom he had abandoned more than a month before. Besides, he was busy composing in his mind an introductory speech to be let off on M. de la Pailletine, in whose manner of receiving him he anticipated some little frigidity.

However, he stepped on deck and advanced towards the officer on the poop with a pleasant smile, doffing his laced hat with one hand and holding forward a letter in the other. M. de la Pailletine took his hands from beneath his coat-tails and also advanced, returning the salute very politely.

"The Commodore de la Pailletine, I believe?"

"The same, monsieur."

The two gentlemen regarded each other narrowly for an instant; then, still smiling, Captain Salt presented his letter, and stood tapping the deck with the toe of his square-pointed shoe and looking amiably about him while the Commodore glanced at the seal, broke it, and began to read.

At the first sentence the muscles of M. de la Pailletine's forehead contracted slightly.

"Just as I expected," said the Englishman to himself, as he stole a glance. But he continued to wear his air of good-fellowship, and his teeth, which were white as milk and quite even, showed all the time.

Meanwhile the Commodore's brow did not clear. He was a wiry, tall man, of beautiful manners and a singularly urbane demeanour, but he could not hide the annoyance which this letter

caused him. He finished it, turned abruptly to the beginning, and read it through again; then looked at Captain Salt with a shade of severity on his face. "Sir," he said, in a carefully regulated voice, "you may count on my obeying his Majesty's commands to the letter." He laid some stress on the two words "commands" and "letter."

"I thank you, monsieur," answered the Englishman, without allowing himself to show that he perceived this.

"I am ordered"—again the word "ordered" was slightly emphasised—"I am ordered to make you welcome on board my galley. Therefore I must ask you to consider yourself at home here for so long as it may please you to stay."

He bowed again, but very stiffly, nor did he offer to shake hands. Captain Salt regarded him with his head tilted a little to one side, and his lips pursed up as if he were whistling silently. As a matter of fact he was whispering to himself, "You shall rue this, my gentleman." But aloud he asked the somewhat puzzling question—

"Is that all, monsieur?"

"Why, yes," answered M. de la Pailletine, "except that you need have no doubt I shall treat you with the respect which is your due, or rather——"

"Pray proceed."

"——or rather, with the respect which his Majesty thinks is your due."

"And which you do not."

"Excuse me, sir; I do not venture to set up my opinion against that of King Lewis."

"Yes, yes, of course; but, monsieur, I was trying to get at your own feelings. You do not think that a man who enlists against his own country, even on the side of his rightful King, can be entitled to any respect?"

"Excuse me——" began the Commodore; but Captain Salt interrupted with a gentle wave of the hand.

"Tut-tut, my dear sir! Pray do not imagine that I resent this expression of your feelings. On the contrary, I am grateful to you for treating me so frankly. I have consolations. Your sovereign"—he pointed to the letter which M. de la Pailletine was folding up and placing in his breast-pocket—"has a more intelligent sense of my merits and my honour."

"Doubtless, monsieur," the Commodore answered; "but permit me to suggest that the discussion of these matters is out of place on deck. Suffer me, therefore, to conduct you to my cabin, which is at your disposal while you choose to honour us."

The Englishman bowed and followed his host below. Nor could Tristram, who had heard every sentence of their conversation, feel sufficiently thankful that he had finished painting the cabin windows three days before, and was not obliged to expose his face to the chance of recognition. And yet it is doubtful if he would have been recognised, so direly had tribulation altered him. He finished his work for the morning with less care than usual, and was drawn upon deck shortly before the dinner hour, by which time the galley's complement was brought on board for a short cruise. As Tristram rose and fell to his oar, that afternoon, he heard his father's voice just over his head, and then the Commodore's answering it. Their tones were not cordial; but their feet were pacing side by side, and it was obvious that the Englishman had already in some measure abated the Commodore's dislike.

Indeed, in the course of the next week Tristram learnt enough to be sure that his father was making steady progress in the affections of the officers of the galley. At first there is little doubt that the Captain was moved to capture their goodwill from a merely vague desire, common to all men of his character, to stand well in the opinion of everybody he

met. He had arrived at St. Germains, and had ridden thence to meet King James, who was returning from Calais in a dog's temper over the failure of the mutinous ships to meet him at that port. Captain Salt presented the Earl's letter, and by depicting the mutiny in colours which his imagination supplied, laying stress on the enthusiasm of the crews, and declaring that the success of their plot was delayed rather than destroyed by the cunning of the usurper, he contrived to inspire hope again in the breast of the cantankerous and exiled monarch, who kept him at his side during the rest of the journey back to Paris, and there introduced him to the favour of King Lewis. The latter monarch, who happened to be bored, asked Captain Salt what he could do for him.

Captain Salt, remembering the Earl's promise, suggested that a descent on the English coast might be made from Dunkirk, if his Majesty were still disposed to befriend the unfortunate House of Stuart.

King Lewis yawned, remembered that he had a certain number of galleys languishing at Dunkirk for want of exercise, and suggested that Captain Salt had better go and see for himself what they were likely to effect.

Captain Salt went. His main purpose was

to live in comfortable quarters at the King's expense, while waiting for the promised letter from the Earl of Marlborough. On the eighth day after his arrival, a small fishing-smack with a green pennant came racing past the two castles at the entrance of Dunkirk pier, slackened her main-sheet, spun down between the forts with the wind astern, and cast anchor in the Royal Basin. Her crew then lowered a little cockle-shell of a dingey, which she carried inboard, and a tanned, red-bearded man pulled straight for the Commodore's galley.

He bore a letter addressed to Captain Roderick Salt. It was written in cypher, but read as follows :—

"Dear S.,—Portland suspected you and had you followed. I saw his eye upon you during your last interview with William. It was clever to get through, nor can I discover how you managed it ; for the account given by your pursuers is plainly absurd. I've been turning over their cock-and-bull story, which finds credence here, and cannot fit it with the probabilities. Yet they seem William's men. I find that the horse on which one of them returned is not the same as that upon which he rode away ; nor does their narrative account for this. But the main point is that you are safe.

By the way, I hope you have kept your son at your side; for I have now received the information about which I dropped you some hints. It appears that he inherits from a great-uncle (one Silvanus Tellworthy) certain American estates, of which you and a Captain Runacles, of Harwich, are the legal administrators. I fancy this has been kept from you; and, if so, a descent upon Harwich may be used to furnish you with a provision for your old age. Still, there is a present danger that you may be declared a traitor, and your goods confiscate, which would spoil all. This (since naught has been proved against you, and the aim of your journey not known) you may avert by keeping your eyes open at Dunquerque, and writing a report of it to Wm. Such a report, aptly drawn, may not only check Portland, but justify me, as knowing your intent from the start, and that it was a move for Wm.'s good.—M."

On reading this, Captain Salt cursed several times, and paced the deck in meditation for a whole afternoon. Then an idea struck him.

During the week that followed he made excellent progress in the affections of the officers of *L'Heureuse*. He had a face full of *bonhomie*, an engaging knack of seeming to flatter his companions while he merely listened

to their talk, a fund of anecdote, and (as we know) a voice for singing that conciliated all who had an ear for music. All these advantages he used. For the next few days the officers came late to bed, and Tristram and his companions could allay the irritation of their skins as they listed. Night after night shouts of laughter came from the Commodore's room: and with the savour of delicate meats there now reached them the notes of a tenor voice that moved many of the most abandoned to tears.

The end was, that the officers admitted him to their counsels, which may have been the reason that the galleys, that until now had taken but the shortest cruises, began to risk more daring expeditions, and once or twice adventured within a league of the English coast. But no occasion was found for landing and burning a town—which was the object continually debated at the officers' board. In fact, the weather did not favour it; and, moreover, the whole line of coast was guarded by patrolling parties, ready to give warning to the train-bands stationed at convenient distances, so that the crews ran no inconsiderable risk of being surprised and cut to pieces if they landed, not to speak of having their galleys taken behind them by the British cruisers. And none knew better

than M. de la Pailletine that the slaves, if left without sufficient guard to coerce them, were as likely as not to murder their overseers and hand their galleys over to the first enemy they met.

Nothing of any consequence, therefore, was done for six weeks; and at the end of that time Captain Salt sought out the Commodore, and announced that he had received a letter from a friend in Paris summoning him thither on private business. The Commodore, who had really grown to like the Englishman, expressed his regret. He suspected nothing.

CHAPTER XII.

WILLIAM OF ORANGE.

On the third day after Captain Salt departed for Paris certain events befel at the Hague which demand our attention.

The campaign of 1691 in Flanders was conducted on both sides with the utmost vigour and the least possible result. Between May and September the armies marched and countermarched, walked up to each other and withdrew with every expression of defiance. No important action was fought, though for some time less than a league divided their hostility. William, whose patience was worn out almost sooner than the shoe-leather of his subjects, left the command in Marlborough's hands, and retired to his park at Loo, whence, in the beginning of July, he posted to the Hague to attend a meeting of the States-General.

On the 17th day of that month, and at ten o'clock in the morning—at which time the King was taking the air in his famous park on the outskirts of the town—a couple of old gentlemen were advancing upon the Hague from the westward, along the old Scheveningen road. They

walked slowly, by reason of their years, but with a certain solemnity of pace which indicated that, in their own opinion at least, they were bound upon an errand of importance. At intervals they paused to mop their faces; and at every pause they regarded the landscape with contempt. One of these old gentlemen was thin and wiry, with a jaw that protruded like a bull-dog's. His companion, for whose sake he corrected every now and then his long stride, was a little hunchback of ferocious demeanour, who looked out on the world from a pair of terrifying green eyes. In place of a wig he wore a bandage round his scalp.

The reader will not need to be told the names of this pair of old gentlemen. After his treatment at the hands of the Earl of Marlborough's soldiers, Captain Barker had been confined to his pavilion by nothing short of main force, which Dr. Beckerleg had with difficulty prevailed on Captain Runacles to exert. The inflammation of the patient's wound increasing with his irascibility, the doctor ended by placing a padlock of his own on the front door, and another on the garden gate, and promising the little man his liberty on the first day he was fit to travel.

Captain Barker flung a monastic herbal at the doctor's head; whereupon the bleeding broke out afresh. Then he fainted.

Ten weeks afterwards, Dr. Beckerleg removed his padlocks, setting free not only the little Captain, but also Mr. Swiggs, who throughout the time had kept diligent watch by his master's bedside.

Narcissus walked out to take a look at the garden. Ten weeks of neglect had played havoc with the beds. He contemplated it for some time, and went down to the "Fish and Anchor" for a mug of beer. There he was welcomed by his cronies, who had missed him sorely; or said so, at any rate.

Captain Barker went to pack his handbag. When Narcissus returned, he was gone. Captain Runacles was gone also.

"Any orders?" said Narcissus to Simeon.

"Not as I know by."

Narcissus went back to the "Fish and Anchor."

The two friends entered the Hague, brisking up their pace and stepping gallantly abreast. Turning to their left, they came, towards the centre of the town, upon a fair sheet of water, with avenues of pleasant trees planted along its northern brink, and behind these trees a public road faced with shops and cabarets, each shaded by a coloured awning. It was the breakfast

hour, and beneath these awnings sat a crowd of soldiers of the guard, citizens and citizens' wives, eating, chattering, smoking, clinking their glasses, and contemplating from their cool shelter the water that twinkled between the trees and the throng that moved up and down the promenade. The two captains were hungry and thirsty. They advanced, and, finding a small table unoccupied, ordered breakfast.

Their appearance, and more especially the bandage around Captain Barker's head, attracted some attention. More than one group turned to stare as the little man began in execrable Dutch to explain his wants to the drawer. The fellow, too, was more than ordinarily dense, and a tempestuous scene was plainly but a matter of a minute or so, when a tall ensign of the guard rose from a neighbouring table, and lifting his hat, addressed the Englishmen in their own language.

"Pardon, gentlemen, but I cannot help overhearing your difficulty; and think, with your leave, I may remove it."

Captain Barker scowled for a moment, and seemed about to take deeper umbrage. But the tall young man seemed quite unconscious of this, and smiled down with the serenest good-will.

"Do not say no. I have been in England, and I love all men of your country."

"Jack," growled Captain Runacles, "this is one of a new generation of Dutchmen. We are getting old, my boy."

The young man's manner was so sincere that Captain Barker gave way with a fair grace —the more readily because there was something in the amiable face which recalled his lost Tristram. In less than a minute he was stating his desires, which were promptly translated into fluent Dutch. The drawer ran off on his errand.

"Since you have been so kind, sir," said the little hunchback politely, "perhaps you can do us another favour."

"What is that?"

"We have come across from Harwich for the purpose of seeking an audience with his Majesty, King William. Can you tell us when and where we are likely to find him?"

"His Majesty is just now at the House in the Wood."

"Where may that be?"

"Not two miles beyond the town. On fine days, such as the present, he gives audience every morning, between nine and ten o'clock, in the open air, walking up and down an alley, which is called for that reason the Promenade of Audience; and again, if no other business

prevents him, at five o'clock in the afternoon, when the day grows cool." He pulled out a stout watch and consulted it. "By six o'clock I must be back there, for at that time my duty begins. But if you will let me accompany you and pass you through the park gates, I will gladly hasten my return, and start—shall we say?—at half-past four."

He would take no denial, but rose and left them, waving his hand, smiling, and turning, after a dozen steps, to call back and assure them he would be punctual.

"He has the very same eyes," Captain Barker muttered, watching him as he disappeared between the trees.

"I remarked it, too," assented Captain Runacles, who understood the allusion at once. "I'd no notion there was such another pair of eyes in the world."

"We'd better adopt him, Jerry," the little man went on, with a wry and hopeless smile; "for it's little chance we have of finding the other one." He gulped as he uttered the last three words, and blinked at the broad sunshine behind the awning.

"The fact is, Jack, the doctor let you out too soon."

"Eh?"

"You're not fit to travel, but ought to be between the blankets at this moment."

"Jerry, that's false, and you know it."

"Oh, do I? Then you'd best give over talking nonsense, or by the Lord I'll take you off and put you to bed this instant! And, what's more, I'll call in a Dutch doctor."

Captain Barker could not deny that the rest beneath the awning was welcome. The road from Scheveningen had been hot and dusty, and his illness had left him weaker than even his comrade imagined. They sat sipping their beer and gazing at the crowd till the town chimes rang out and announced half-past four. At the first note they saw their young friend advancing from the Buitenhof.

"Here I am, you see. But I have taken a liberty, I fear, since leaving you."

"Eh? What have you been doing?" Captain Runacles inquired.

"Why, sir, perceiving that your friend was but lately recovered from an illness, and remembering that though the distance to the House in the Wood is but two miles or less, the distance there and back is almost four, I have brought him a litter. Perhaps I did wrong?"

He pointed to the litter, which two men in blue blouses were bringing across the road.

"Not at all, sir. On the contrary, your thoughtfulness puts me to shame," answered Captain Runacles, with something like a blush.

Captain Barker also thanked him, and added, "Decidedly, it might be Tristram's very self"—a remark which the young officer did not understand in the least. But he smiled happily. The mere pleasure of doing a kindness and finding it appreciated was so strong in this youth that he almost regretted he had not sacrificed a fortnight's pay and hired a chariot and six horses.

Captain Barker climbed into the litter, and the party set out at a leisurely pace, which brought them to the park gates in a little more than half-an-hour. A couple of sentries kept guard here, and within the lodge a dozen others were playing at dominoes, and laughing like children.

"If you will permit me," said their conductor, as Captain Barker alighted, "I will conduct you as far as the Promenade of Audience. Otherwise you will have to go with one of my comrades, and probably with one who is ignorant of English."

Taking their consent for granted, he marched them past the sentries and through the iron gates. A broad avenue of yews confronted them, with a gravelled carriage-drive that stretched away

till lost amid interlacing boughs. A couple of gentlemen were advancing down this avenue, in brisk conversation. They were about to pass our friends when the elder of the pair—an old gentleman in blue, with a ruddy complexion and apoplectic neck—glanced up casually, uttered an exclamation, and came to a halt.

Leaving his companion to stare, he advanced towards Captain Runacles and saluted him with punctilio.

"This is a great pleasure," he observed in very good English.

"I'm very glad of that, sir," Captain Runacles answered, "though 'pon my life I don't know why it should be."

"I have been expecting you."

"Indeed?"

"Will you be good enough to withdraw with me behind these yews, in order that our conversation may not be observed from the lodge windows?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

The whole party followed him, much puzzled. He led them between a couple of gigantic trees, glanced around him, and asked suddenly—

"The young man, I presume, gave you my message?"

"Now, what in the world——" began Captain

Runacles with a bewildered stare. But the little hunchback was quicker.

"What young man, sir?" he cried sharply. "Do you mean Tristram Salt?"

"I really don't know his name; but he was accompanied, to be sure, by a Captain Salt, when I met him at Vlaardingen."

Captain Barker groaned.

"But excuse me," pursued the old gentleman in blue, still addressing Captain Runacles, "I spoke not only of a young man, but of a message. Did he deliver it?"

"If you mean Tristram Salt, I have not clapped eyes on him since the 1st of May last."

"Then I will deliver it myself. You do not appear to know me——"

"Not from Adam."

"My name is Cornelius van Adrienssen, and you, Captain Runacles, once flung a boot at my head."

"Did I, indeed! It was in a moment of extreme irritation, no doubt."

"We were engaged off the Texel—June the 5th, '71, was the date. You were on board the *Galloper*, I on the *Zeelandshoop*. Night parted us——"

"I begin to remember the incident."

"Then I need not proceed. Let me merely remark that I have kept that boot."

"Whatever for?"

"What for, sir?" cried the choleric old gentleman, now fairly hopping with rage. "What for? To throw it back, sir—that's why."

"My dear Captain van Adrienssen, is not this rather childish? Twenty years is a long time to harbour resentment."

"You shall fight me, sir."

"Tut, tut!"

"I regret that I have not the boot with me to fling back at you——"

"You have a pair on your feet, sir," suggested the Englishman, whose temper was rising.

"——but this shall do instead!" and taking his glove, Captain van Adrienssen dashed it in Captain Runacles' face.

"By the Lord, you shall pay for this!"

"I am ready, sir."

They tugged off their coats, and pulled out their swords.

"Sirs, sirs!" cried the young ensign; "remember you are in his Majesty's park."

But before his sentence was out the two swords were crossed, and the old gentlemen attacking each other with the unregulated ardour of a pair of schoolboys.

"Jerry, Jerry," murmured Captain Barker, "you never had much science, but this is fool-work."

Captain Runacles heard, straightened his aim and controlled himself. He had little science, but an extremely tough wrist. As for Captain van Adrienssen, the veins of his neck were so swollen with passion that his wig curled up at the edge and stood out straight behind him in the absurdest fashion.

"The boot—the boot!" he kept exclaiming, stamping with each lunge. "Take that for the boot, sir!" He aimed a furious thrust in tierce at Captain Runacles' breast.

"And that for the glove, sir!" retorted his adversary, parrying and running his blade on and through the exposed arm by the elbow.

The arm dropped. Captain van Adrienssen scowled, looked round, and was caught in his companion's arms as he fell.

"And now, sir, let me express my regret," began Captain Jerry, advancing and stooping over him.

"I'll have you yet!" retorted this implacable old gentleman; and with that fainted away. He awoke to find his arm bandaged, and the little group still standing around him.

"Peter," he said, sitting up with an effort; "get my coat."

"But, captain, you cannot put it on," remonstrated Peter, a squarely built man, with eyes of a porcelain blue.

"Then how in the world do you suppose that I'm to get past the sentries?"

"You'll be carried."

"And let every man of them know that this gentleman and I have been fighting in his Majesty's park! Tut-tut; you'll have them both arrested in a jiffy. Give me my coat!"

"You cannot get your arm into it."

"My worthy Peter, you're my excellent lieutenant and a fair seaman; but I begin to doubt if you'll ever make a captain. You've no resource. Take your knife. Now slit down the inner seam of the sleeve—so. Now lift me up and help me into it."

He stood on his legs. His face was a trifle pale, but he kept his jaw set firmly.

"Now button the sleeve at the wrist."

"But it still gapes above."

"Of course it does. Therefore we will walk arm-in-arm; only you must hold me very gently. There, that's it." He nodded stiffly, and was moving away on Peter's arm, when Captain Barker interposed.

"Excuse me, Captain van Adrienssen, but just outside the park gate you'll find a litter, which I am happy to place at your service."

"Thank you, sir, but I'll not use it."

"You will," said Peter, decidedly.

"Why, sir, we have to start for Amsterdam to-night."

"You'll get no further than the Hague," said Peter; "and there you'll be put to bed."

They walked slowly off, arm-in-arm. Drawing near the sentries, Captain van Adrienssen groaned.

"Going to faint?" Peter asked.

"Not till I get outside."

He was as good as his word, and they went through the gates without exciting suspicion. The litter was there, and Peter, beckoning to the men, explained the case in a whisper. His companion offered no opposition. Indeed, no sooner was he placed in the litter than he swooned away.

King William was still strolling in his favourite avenue when the two captains approached, led by their friend the ensign, who was beginning to wish himself well out of the business. At his Majesty's side paced William

Bentinck, Earl of Portland, whom we have already met, in the course of this narrative, in the little inn at Vlaardingen. The two were alone and in earnest converse, but looked up as the party approached along the avenue.

"H'm, it appears to me that I know these two shapes," said William.

"They are odd enough to be remembered."

"That is the figure which honesty cuts in the country over which I have the misfortune to rule—or rather to reign. My friend, these are two honest Englishmen, and therefore worth observation. Moreover, they are about to give me the devil of a time. Well, gentlemen," he continued, lifting his voice as they approached, "what is your business?"

"We desire your Majesty to listen to us."

"On a matter of importance?"

"To us—yes. It has brought us from England."

"Speak, then."

"Your Majesty," Captain Barker began, his voice trembling slightly, "we have come to offer you, and to beg that you will accept, our swords and our service."

"That is very pretty, sir," answered William, after a pause, during which his eye kindled with some triumph; "but unless I do you an injustice,

Captain Barker and Captain Runacles, there is some condition attached to this surrender."

"None, sire, but that which your Majesty's self imposed less than three months back. We are come to redeem, if we may, the young man of whom you then robbed us."

"Robbed!"

"Forgive me, sire—deprived. See, your Majesty; we are two old men, but active; battered somewhat, but not ignorant; worn, but not worn-out. We are at your service: take us, use us as you will. We will serve you faithfully, loyally, without question, until we die or your enemies break us. Only restore our son, Tristram Salt."

"Gentlemen, I will not say but that I am gratified by this——" William paused, saw the hope spring into their eyes, and added, with assumed coldness——"only it happens that you come too late."

The two honest faces fell.

"Too—late?" Captain Barker stammered, staring stupidly at the King. "Is my boy—dead?" The question came in a dull, sick tone, that turned their Sovereign's heart within him.

"Forgive me, gentlemen; I had no right to play thus with your feelings. You have come too late, only because I gave the young man his

discharge, more than two months ago, with a passport to take him back to England.

"But he has not arrived!"

"He started, at any rate; and in company with one who appeared to have the best right to take care of him—I mean his father, Captain Roderick Salt."

Captain Barker groaned.

"May it please your Majesty," said Captain Jemmy, thrusting himself forward, "but Roderick's Salt's the damn'dest villain in your service; and that's saying a good deal. I mean no offence, of course."

"Of course not," commented the Earl of Portland, who was hugely delighted.

"I believe that opinion is held by some," his Majesty observed, with a side-glance at his friend.

"Not by me," said Portland, tranquilly. "There are worse than Salt—whom, after all, your Majesty has neither enriched nor ennobled."

William frowned. For a moment or two he stood, scraping the gravel gently with the side of his boot. At last he spoke—

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your offer; and some day I may take advantage of it to command you, for honest men (however wrong-headed) and good commanders"—this with a slight bow—"are always scarce. For the moment,

however, I should feel that I wronged you by accepting——"

"Your Majesty is good to us. But our word holds."

"Thank you. I had guessed that. Nevertheless, I advise you, just now, to return to England and wait. I have some knowledge of Captain Salt's movements; and when last your lad was heard of he had parted company with his father and was making for the coast. I have some quickness in reading character; and there is a certain placid obstinacy in that young man which persuades me he will reach Harwich in time. Return, therefore, and wait with what patience you may. Moreover, Captain Barker, I perceive that you are recovering from some wound."

"Which explains, sire, the tardiness of my submission. I was starting to seek an audience on the morning that you sailed from Harwich, when your soldiers——"

"My soldiers?"

"Yes, sire; but perhaps they erred from abundance of zeal."

Portland looked at the speaker shrewdly. "You know more than you tell us, my friend," he said quietly.

"Possibly, my lord; but it is nothing that can affect his Majesty now."

"You are under some promise?" William asked, gravely.

"We are, sire; but be assured that if it touched your welfare we had never come to lay our services at your disposal."

"I believe you, my friends. And now, about starting for England—I was about to propose that as Captain van Adrienssen's frigate——"

"Captain van Adrienssen!"

"You know him? He is about to sail from Amsterdam in the frigate *Merry Maid* to escort a convoy of thirty-six merchantmen to the Thames. If you start at once you will overtake him."

"Unfortunately, sire, Captain van Adrienssen will not be able to start for many days."

"Eh?"

"He is unwell."

"Unwell? Why, it is not an hour since he left me!"

"Nevertheless——"

"Let me explain, sire," said Captain Runacles, stepping forward again. "It happened thus. We met Captain van Adrienssen on our way from the Hague."

"Yes, yes."

"And it appeared—though I had forgotten it—that twenty years ago I had the imprudence

to throw a boot at his head. It was off the Texel——"

"Have you lost your senses?"

"I beg your Majesty to listen. The sight of me revived that painful recollection. We pulled out our swords and fell on each other, forgetting, alas! that now we are both servants of your Majesty. It is annoying; but before we could remember it, Captain van Adrienssen was wounded."

William's brow was black as night.

"A duel?" he said sternly.

"Your Majesty, it could hardly be dignified by that name. Say rather——"

"What shall I do with these incorrigibles?" asked the King, turning to Portland. "At this time, too, when I've not a single other commander of value within call!"

"If I may advise you, sire—but, first, will you command these gentlemen to retire?"

William dismissed them with a wave of the hand, and they withdrew to a little distance among the trees, where they waited in considerable trepidation.

It was a full half an hour before Portland came towards them, trying to hide a smile.

"Pouf!" he said, "that was a tough business, gentlemen. I have persuaded his Majesty

to accept the offer he declined a while ago, and to use your services."

"In what way, my lord?"

"You will go at once to the Hague, and find out the condition of Captain van Adrienssen. If, as I suspect, he be unfit to travel, you will, with this authority, take over his papers and post to Amsterdam, where you will find the *Merry Maid* frigate with her convoy. You are to escort this convoy to the Thames—but you will read your instructions in the papers which Van Adrienssen will give you. You, Captain Barker, are the senior, I believe. Yes? I thought so; and therefore you will take command. Unless your friend declines to act on this occasion as your lieutenant——"

"My lord, how can we thank you?"

"By serving his Majesty," answered Portland; and added significantly, "rather than the Earl of Marlborough."

The two friends walked away, treading on air. But perhaps their friend the ensign, from whom they parted affectionately at the foot of the avenue, was happier even than they. For not only did his heart rejoice at their good fortune, but his Majesty had failed to inquire whether the duel had been fought within or without the park gates.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN SALT EFFECTS ONE SURPRISE AND PLANS TWO MORE.

On the sixth day after his departure, Captain Salt returned to Dunkirk unexpectedly.

He arrived about four in the afternoon, and was rowed at once to the Commodore's galley. He climbed on deck, and looked about him. The lieutenant stepped forward. Captain Salt shook hands, and asked—

"Where is the Commodore?"

"In his cabin."

"Alone?"

"No; he is holding a council of war. All his captains are there."

Captain Salt whistled softly to himself.

"How long have they been sitting?" he asked.

"Less than ten minutes. In fact they have but just arrived."

"Thank you. I'll go down and look in."

"My friend," he said to himself, as he walked aft and descended the ladder, "the chance has come sooner than you expected. You'll have to play this game boldly."

He knocked at the cabin door and entered, with the dust of travel thick upon him. He had ridden thirty-six miles since breakfast, along dusty roads and under a broiling sun. Nevertheless, his manner was cool enough as he bowed to all present.

"I must apologise, gentlemen, for the state of my clothes; but I heard you were sitting, and could not rest until I had saluted you."

They welcomed him heartily as he dropped into a vacant chair. M. de la Pailletine reached across the table and shook hands with him.

"It is very thoughtful of you," said the Commodore. "We were about to draw up a plan of the cruises to be taken this week, and shall be glad to have your advice."

"I'm afraid, gentlemen, I'm too weary to offer much advice. But that need not prevent my listening with attention to the wisdom of others."

There was the faintest shade of derision in his voice, if they had any cause for suspecting it. As it was, however, not a man present had the slightest mistrust of him. He had conquered all their prejudices.

The Commodore resumed the short speech he had been making; and when he had concluded, one captain followed another with criticism and

fresh proposals—Captain Baudus, of *Le Paon*, the Chevalier de Sainte-Croix, of *La Merveille*, Captain Denoyre, of the *Sanspareil*. During their speeches Captain Salt sat perfectly silent, either resting his head on his hands and stifling his yawns, as though politely concealing his weariness, or drumming quietly with his fingers on the table and staring up at the ceiling like one lost in thought.

But, all of a sudden, as M. de la Pailletine was in the act of offering some remarks upon a scheme of Captain Denoyre's for a descent upon the Isle of Thanet, the Englishman, still yawning, got upon his legs and said very carelessly—

"I regret to interrupt *M. le Chef d'escadre*, but we waste time."

The Commodore paused, open-mouthed, in the middle of a sentence, and stared.

"Yes, yes," repeated Captain Salt, nodding at him with the coolest assurance; "we are really wasting time. Be so good as to lend me your attention while I sketch out a little plan that I have drawn up for a descent upon Harwich."

The officers round the board were fairly taken aback by this stroke of impudence. The Commodore was the first to recover his presence of mind, and said, drawing himself up—

"Monsieur appears not to have observed that I was speaking."

"Pardon, sir, but I observed that you were speaking overmuch. But let me proceed. Harwich, as you know, is a port at the mouth of the River Stour, at the extreme north-east corner of Essex. I give you this information, gentlemen, as I am not sure if any of you have travelled so far."

The captains looked at one another, and the eldest among them, M. Baudus, of the *Paon*, stood up.

"Monsieur will forgive the remark," he said, "but it appears to me that he forgets his place."

"Tut-tut," answered the Englishman, with an air of slight impatience; "I must trouble you to sit down, sir, and attend. Really," he continued, looking around, "I must insist upon the attention of everyone, as I shall need your intelligent co-operation. My plan is this: I mean to make this a night attack. We should leave the harbour here in four days' time—that is to say, on the 23rd, if the weather holds, and not later than six o'clock in the morning. It may possibly be earlier, but that will depend to some extent on the wind."

M. de la Pailletine by this time was white with passion. He began to comprehend that

his guest would not dare to speak thus without some high authority to back him.

"Are we to understand, sir, that in this proposed expedition we sail under your orders?"

"Certainly."

"May I ask to see your authority?"

"Of course you may."

Captain Salt put a hand into his breast and drew out a folded paper. Laying this on the table, he let his eyes travel round with a quiet smile.

It was signed in the handwriting and sealed with the seal of his Majesty King Lewis.

M. de la Pailletine picked up the paper with a shaking hand and read it through. There was no room for demur. The King commanded him, as chief of the squadron of galleys lying in Dunkirk, to place his ships, officers, and crews at Captain Salt's disposal, and to follow his instructions implicitly throughout the expedition. Moreover, the Intendant was ordered to furnish whatever stores, artillery, etc., Captain Salt should find necessary to the success of his design. If he should require it, the fighting strength of the galleys should be supplemented by drafts from the regiments stationed in the citadel, the Rice Bank, and Forts Galliard, Rever, and Bon Espérance.

The Commodore read all this, and laid the

paper down on the table. The officers around him scanned his face and saw there was no hope of resistance. Nevertheless, for a moment they looked mutinous.

Their superior officer, however, set the example of graceful obedience. He stood up, and looked the Englishman straight in the face. Then he spoke with a voice that trembled a little over the opening words, but after that proceeded smoothly and composedly enough.

"Monsieur, it is my honour to serve his Majesty without reservation, even when he chooses to put a slight upon his tried servants. Unfold your scheme. We will listen, and lend you our best co-operation."

"I thank you, monsieur. Is that all?"

"No, sir; not quite all. You will permit me in addition to remark that you are a very dirty blackguard, and that, if you choose to resent this criticism, I am your very obedient servant."

"Ah, yes. We will discuss that, if you please, as soon as this business is over. Meanwhile let me proceed with my remarks."

That same evening Captain Salt assumed the command, and within half an hour it was patent to every slave in the squadron that something beyond the ordinary was afoot. The new commander

began to issue orders at once. Curiously enough, one of the first of these was given to the fishing-smack with the green pennant, which had brought him the Earl of Marlborough's letter five days before, and had lain at anchor ever since in the Basin. It was pretty well known to everyone in Dunkirk that this little craft plied to and fro in the Jacobite service, and was allowed to pass the forts without challenge. Indeed, she had a special permit. Therefore nobody wondered when Captain Salt paid her red-bearded skipper a visit that evening, on his way to the citadel; nor was the skipper astonished to receive a letter for the Earl of Marlborough's secret agent at Ostend, and be bidden to leave the harbour that night.

Yet the red-bearded skipper would have been considerably astonished had he been able to read the cypher in which this letter was written, or had he the faintest idea that the small mark on the corner of the wrapper meant that it was to be translated at once and despatched post-haste to King William.

For, indeed, the captain was now playing not merely a double, but a triple, and perhaps a quadruple, game. He was not only playing for William against James, and for James against William, but for the Earl against both, and for

himself above all. For the moment he wished to get to Harwich with power over the two old men who (as he conceived it) were defrauding him of his privileges; and to obtain full possession of those privileges he must stand well with William, who at present suspected him.

What better proof could he offer that his journey had been all in his master's interest than by engaging the six galleys at Dunkirk in an attack upon Harwich, and forewarning the King of his design? Or how could the Earl have a better chance of clearing himself of the King's suspicions than by receiving this warning and passing it on to the King?

Unfortunately, this accomplished schemer omitted to take account of three accidents, for the simple reason that he could not have anticipated them:—1st, the two old men whom he meant to terrify at Harwich were at that moment in Holland; and, 2nd, the son, in whose name he meant to terrify them, slept every night within a foot of his head, a galley-slave, disguised beyond recognition, and filled with a just resentment. No. 3 will be mentioned hereafter.

The little fishing-smack sailed out of Dunkirk that evening, an hour after sunset.

During the next three days Captain Salt

worked hard. Sufficient stores were laid in to last for a week's cruise. The slaves who worked on shore were brought on board. The galleys' beaks were tested, the guns examined, oars and rigging carefully overhauled. A fresh supply of ammunition was drawn from the citadel, and the fighting crew of each vessel increased by fifty men, with a few Swiss artillerymen from the batteries of Bourgogne, Auguenois and Santerre. In all this, M. de la Pailletine lent the readiest aid. He had postponed his animosity to the day when they should return to harbour; and to the casual eye he and the Englishman were excellent friends.

By the night of August 22nd all was ready.

At nine o'clock next morning the six galleys started in solemn procession past the forts and out into the open sea, which was smooth as glass. A light but steady breeze breathed across the sky from the north-east. They could have hoped for nothing better. The broad lateen sails were spread, and the slaves sat quietly before their oars, ready to row, though for hour after hour there was no need of rowing. The six vessels kept within easy distance of each other, and Captain Salt, on the deck of *L'Heureuse*, directed their movements with a serenity that cheered even the poor men on the benches below him.

As the awning shook and the masts creaked gently above them, they stretched their limbs, drew long breaths, and felt that after all it was good to live.

So steady did the wind keep all day that about five in the evening they brought the English coast in sight. It was the opinion of all the captains that they should run up for Harwich at once; but the Englishman had other views.

"It is too early," he told M. de la Pailletine. "There are cruisers about, and if we are seen the game will be spoiled."

He gave orders to lower the sails and stand off till nightfall. The captains, of course, obeyed.

They had not lain to above an hour when the man who had been sent to the mast-head of *L'Heureuse* shouted out—

"A fleet to the north!"

"Whither bound?" called up Captain Salt.

"Steering west."

"What number?"

The man was silent for a moment, then answered—

"Thirty-six sail, all merchant-built, and an escort."

"What is she like?"

"A frigate, of about thirty guns."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GALLEYS AND THE FRIGATE.

I.—The Frigate.

The *Merry Maid* had left the Texel by the narrow gut called De Witt's Diep, with her convoy following in line and in admirable order. The breeze was fair for England. A full round moon rose over the sand-banks behind them as Captain Barker sent the pilots ashore and stood easily out to sea, for the most of his merchant ships were sluggish sailers, and not a few overladen. So clear was the night that, as he paced the quarter-deck with the dew falling steadily around him, he could not only count their thirty-six lanterns, but even discern their piled canvas glimmering as they stole like ghosts in his wake.

That night he left his watch for an hour only, when shortly before dawn Captain Runacles came to relieve him, threatening mutiny unless he retired to snatch a little slumber. But the sun was scarce up before the little man reappeared. The pride of his old profession was working like yeast within him. His breast swelled and his chin lifted as he found the convoy still sailing in close order, obeying his

signals smoothly and intelligently as a trained pack obeys its huntsman. He was delighted with the frigate and her crew, who were English to a man. To be sure there was a fair sprinkling of Dutchmen among the soldiers; but his heart had begun to warm somewhat towards that nation. As he shambled to and fro, jerking out from time to time some necessary orders, he saw that he had the respect of all these fellows, even while they smiled at him. They felt that this distorted little framework held a man. He divined this with the quick sensibility that marks all deformed people. His green eyes kindled. In the pride of his soul he had almost forgotten Tristram.

The sight of the English coast, dim and purple beneath the declining sun, brought it back to him with a pang. After all, Tristram was still lost, and his journey to Holland had been a failure therefore. With a sudden contempt for all that a moment before he had been enjoying, he turned to his friend and asked him to take charge for a while.

Nothing more was said, but Captain Runacles guessed what drove the little man below like a wounded beast, and began to pace the deck gloomily.

"He'll never take it up again," he muttered.

"It's all very well, and he thinks he's getting comfort out of it. But it won't do."

He paused for a moment, contemplated the distant coast, and resumed his tread, repeating—"It won't do, Jack; it won't do a bit, my boy."

Captain Barker sat in his cabin alone, staring at a knot of wood on the table before him. There were traces of tears on his cheeks.

Somebody tapped at the door.

"What is it?"

"The devil," answered Captain Runacles' voice, coolly. "Six galleys to the south, between us and the Thames!"

Captain Barker sprang up and hurried up on deck.

"So those are the craft I've heard so much about," he remarked, taking down the glass through which he had been eyeing them for a couple of minutes.

"What do you propose, Jack?"

"Propose? Why, propose to do what I'm here for—to save the convoy."

"That's very pretty. But do you know how fast those sharks can move?"

"No, I don't. But I know they can outpace us. Nevertheless, I'll save the convoy."

"How?"

"There's only one way."

"And that is——"

"By losing the frigate."

Captain Runacles looked at him for a second, and then placed a hand on his shoulder. This simple gesture expressed all his heart. Captain Barker turned briskly.

"Signal the convoy," he shouted, "to make all sail and run for the Thames!"

II.—The Galleys.

M. de la Pailletine was in some respects a weak man. He was impatient. Up to this moment his behaviour in an extremely galling position had been perfect. He had been content to bide his time and had furthered every order issued by his rival with the cheerfullest alacrity.

But when the man at the mast-head announced the advance of the merchant fleet, he allowed himself to be tempted and turned to Captain Salt, who stood beside him.

"You will follow them, of course?"

"Of course I shall do nothing of the sort. On the contrary, I intend to steer to the south, out of their sight."

"You will fling away this splendid prize?"

"Let me remind you, monsieur, that we are bound for Harwich."

"But this is folly, Captain Salt! Harwich will remain where it is, and we can ravage it at any time. Never again may we have so fine an opportunity of capturing thirty-six merchantmen and a British frigate almost without a blow."

"Excuse me, M. de la Pailletine, but I do not allow my orders to be criticised."

"Then listen to me, sir," retorted the Commodore, his face red with fury, as he drew from his coat the orders which the King had addressed to him. "You see this paper? Very well; I destroy it." He tore it into shreds, and let the pieces flutter over the galley's side.

"Are you aware of what that action means?" Captain Salt was white to the lips.

"I am, sir."

"It is treason."

"You think so, perhaps. But a Frenchman should best know what is due to the King of France. Nevertheless, I shall summon the captains to confirm my action. Will you attend them in my cabin?"

"Thank you; no, sir. I am quite sure that they will support you. It remains to see what his Majesty will say when I report your contempt of his orders."

"That is for the future to decide. Meanwhile be good enough to recollect that I com-

mand the squadron from this moment. Should you choose to volunteer, well and good. If not, my cabin is at your disposal as soon as the captains have left it."

He bowed, and turned away to summon the captains.

They came in haste, and were, of course, unanimous; though it is difficult to say how far they were influenced by sound argument and how far by pique and a desire to thwart the Englishman. While they sat, Captain Salt remained on deck cursing quietly and examining the approaching enemy with no pleasant stare.

Orders were issued to all the six galleys to attack the fleet. Four were told off against the merchantmen and commanded to make all speed to get between them and the Thames; while *L'Heureuse* herself and *La Merveille* (commanded by the Chevalier de Sainte-Croix) were to attack and take possession of the frigate.

Immediately they began to make all possible haste with sails and oars. Captain Salt withdrew to the cabin in dudgeon, and M. de la Pailletine took his place. From their benches below the slaves heard his voice shouting out orders right and left, and at once they had to catch up their oars and row. The English fleet when first spied was coming right across their

course, and still held on its way when it perceived the Frenchman's intent. In pursuance of this intent the four galleys made off with all speed to place themselves between the merchantmen and the coast, while the Commodore and the Chevalier de Sainte-Croix bore down on the frigate, straight as an arrow.

And now began a hard time for Tristram and his companions below. They tugged and sweated, and presently *L'Heureuse* began to leap through the water. Above the swish of the long sweeps rose a tumult of oaths, imprecations, outcries, sobs, as the overseers plied their whips, not caring where they struck. Overhead they heard the guns running out, the rolling of shot and trampling of feet, the shouts and replies of officers and men. They could see nothing of the frigate for which they were bound, but from the confusion and hurry expected every moment to feel the shock as the galley's beak drove into her.

Then for a second or two all the noise ceased.

The reason was this. For some little while the frigate held on her course for the mouth of the Thames. Not a sail more did she carry than when she first came in sight. It almost seemed

as if her captain had not seen the enemy flying to destroy him. For thirty-five minutes she held quietly on beside her convoy. And then the helm was shifted, and she came down straight into the Frenchman's teeth.

It was a gallant stroke, and a subtle—so subtle that M. de la Pailletine mistook its meaning and gave a great shout of joy. He fancied he saw the English delivered into his hand. But his rejoicing was premature.

To begin with, he perceived, the next moment, that the frigate, by hastening the attack, had caught his galley alone. Into this trap he had been led partly by the excellence of his crew. Not only was his the fleetest vessel of the six, but he had always been jealous to choose the strongest *forçats* to man it. Moreover, M. de Sainte-Croix had been slow in starting, and by this time *La Merveille* was a league or more behind her consort.

Still the Commodore was in no way disturbed. He admitted to his lieutenant beside him that the frigate was showing desperate gallantry; but he never doubted for a moment that his galley alone, with two hundred fighting men aboard, would be more than a match for her.

Down came the *Merry Maid*, closer and closer, her red-crossed flag fluttering bravely at

the peak; and on rushed the galley, until the two were within cannon-shot. M. de la Pailletine gave the order, and sent a shot to meet her from one of the four guns in the prow. As the thunder of it died away and the smoke cleared, he waited for the Englishman's reply. There was none. The frigate held on her course, silent as death.

III.—The Frigate.

The two English captains stood on the quarter-deck, side by side, the tall man and the dwarf. Beyond issuing an order or two, neither had spoken a word for twenty minutes. Once Captain Barker glanced over his shoulder to see how the merchantmen were faring, and calculated that within half an hour their enemies would intercept them. Then he looked down on his men, who stood ready by the guns, motionless, with lips set, repressing the fury of battle; and beyond them to the galley as she came, churning the sea, her oars rising and falling like the strong wings of a bird.

"My God!" he said softly, "if only Tristram were here to see!"

IV.—The Galleys.

When the frigate failed to answer his salute, M. de la Pailletine jumped to a fresh conclusion.

"*Mordieu!*" he cried, here is another English captain who, like our friend Salt, is weary of carrying his Sovereign's colours. He doesn't mean to strike a blow. A minute and we shall see his flag hauled down."

But the minute passed, and another, and yet a third, and the English flag still flew.

By this time they were within musket-shot. One by one the four guns had spoken from the galley's prow, and still there was no answer. On the brink of the tragedy there was silence for an instant. Then a few of the French musketeers seemed to find this intolerable, and fired without receiving the order. Followed a silence again, and still the *Merry Maid* came on, as if to impale herself on the galley's beak.

And then, sûddenly, when in five minutes the vessels must have collided, round flew the frigate's wheel. For a minute and a half she fetched up, as if awaking to the consequences of her folly; shuddered and shook against the wind; and, as her sails filled again, fetched away on the westerly tack for her life.

For a full two minutes the French were taken aback.

"Fools, fools!" shouted M. de la Pailletine, beside himself with joy.

The order flew for the slaves on the larboard

benches to hold water for a minute, and the galley's head came round. Nothing gives more spirit than a flying enemy. From mouth to mouth ran the whisper that the English were showing their heels; and in a moment these poor devils, who owed all their misery to France, were pulling like madmen. Jeers rose from the deck.

"If Monsieur the Englishman does not strike within two minutes, down he goes to the bottom."

"The idiot, to expose his stern!"

"On the whole, it is just as well that *La Merveille* is so far behind. We shall have all the glory to ourselves—eh, my children?"

* * * * * *

On board the frigate, Captain Barker said four words only—

"Take the wheel, Jemmy."

Captain Runacles stepped to it, and the steersman gave place.

In truth the hunchback, though this was his first acquaintance with a galley, knew well enough that she would strike for the frigate's stern as the weakest point. This was precisely what he wished her to do.

Captain Runacles stood with his hands on the wheel, and waited, glancing back over his shoulder.

Captain Barker stood by the taffrail with one eye upon the galley and his face turned in profile to his friend. His right hand was lifted.

* * * * * *

The Commodore had made all his dispositions. The galley was to plunge her beak straight into the *Merry Maid's* stern, and its crew, after one discharge of cannon to clear the frigate's poop, were to board at once. The men stood ready with their hatchets and cutlasses, and set up a wild yell as they drove straight for her. From below the slaves echoed it with a melancholy wail.

On they tore. As they yelled again *L'Heureuse's* beak was but twenty yards from her prey. A few more leaps and it would strike.

"One—two——"

The little man looked back in their faces and smiled.

"Three—four—five——"

He dropped his hand. Quick as lightning Captain Jerry spun the wheel round. The stern swung sharply off.

The next moment the galley flew past. Her beak, missing the stern, rushed on, tearing great splinters out of the *Merry Maid's* flank. Her starboard oars snapped like matchwood, hurling the slaves backwards on their benches, and

killing a dozen on the spot. Then she brought up, helplessly disabled, right under the frigate's side.

And then at length the English cheer rang forth. In an instant the grappling-irons were out, and the frigate held her foe, clasped, strained close against her ribs.

And at length, too, with a blinding flash and a roar, the English guns spoke. A minute had done it all. Sixty seconds before the gallant vessel had lain apparently at the Frenchman's mercy. Now the Frenchman was fastened inextricably, while the crowd upon deck stood as much exposed as if the galley were a raft.

Down swept the grape-shot, tearing ghastly passages through them. They were near enough to be scorched by the flame of it. Down and across it rent them, as they crouched and fought with each other to get away and hide. There was no hiding. Before the breath of it they went down in rows, strewing the deck horribly, mangled, riddled, blown in miserable pieces.

In a trice, too, the English masts and rigging were swarming with musketeers and sailors who poured hand-grenades among them like hail, scattering wounds and death. The Frenchmen no longer thought of attacking. Such was the panic among officers as well as common men that

they were incapable even of resistance. Scores who were neither killed nor wounded lay flat on their faces, counterfeiting death and hoping to find safety.

This carnage lasted, perhaps, for five minutes. *L'Heureuse's* consort was still near upon a league behind, and the other four galleys were still busily chasing the merchantmen.

Captain Barker looked, and was well content. But he had much work still before him, and to do it properly he must husband his ammunition.

He gave the order to board. Forty or fifty men dropped over the *Merry Maid's* side, cutlass in mouth, and rushed along the galley's deck, hewing down all who ventured to oppose them, and sparing only the slaves, who made no resistance. At last, and merely by the weight of numbers, they were driven back. But this did the Frenchmen no good. Instantly the frigate opened fire again and murdered them by scores.

It was in this extremity that M. de la Paillettine cast his eyes around and found himself forced to do what Captain Barker from the first had meant him to do. The four galleys that had started after the convoy were by this time sweeping along on the full tide of success. In another five minutes the pathway to the Thames

would be blocked, and all the merchant vessels at their mercy.

M. de la Pailletine hoisted the flag of distress. He called them to his help.

A wild hurrah broke out from the crew of the frigate. The order meant their destruction: for how could the *Merry Maid* contend against six galleys? Yet they cheered, for they had guessed what their captain had in his mind. And the little man's greenish eyes sparkled as he heard.

"Good boys!" he said briefly, turning to his friend. "The convoy is saved, my lad: and O, but Jemmy, you did it prettily!"

V.—The Galley (in the hold).

Let us go back, for a minute or two, to Tristram.

The oar at which he tugged was one of the starboard tier; and when *L'Heureuse* missed her stroke, as we have told, it went like a sugar-stick, flinging him and his companions back across the bench. Further than this they could not fly, because the stout chains which fastened them were but ten feet long. Tristram, indeed, was hurled scarcely so far as the rest, for his seat was the inmost from the gangway, and right against the galley's side; so that he got the shortest swing of the oar.

They scrambled up just as the fire of grape-shot opened. And then Tristram made an appalling discovery.

The hole through which their oar was worked had been split wider by the crash; and now, looking out, he saw that it lay just opposite the mouth of an English cannon. In this position they had been brought up by the frigate's grappling-irons.

It took him but an instant to see also that the cannon, as it stared him in the face, was loaded.

The two vessels, moreover, lay so close that by reaching up with his hand he could have laid his hand on its muzzle.

It was a horrible moment. There were four Frenchmen and a Turk ranged along the bench beside him. He looked into their faces. They were ashen grey to the lips. No one could move to get out of the way: the chains prevented that. The Huguenot was praying wildly. Only the Turk preserved his composure, and even he had turned pale under his bronze skin.

Somebody cried: "Lie flat!"

In a second every one of Tristram's companions had flung himself flat on the bench. Tristram glanced again at the gun. Even at that moment he had enough presence of mind to

note that it was pointed downwards, and at such an angle that those who lay flat must infallibly receive all its contents. He noted this even while it seemed that every one of his faculties was frozen up. He felt that he could move neither hand nor foot; and somehow he knew that since, because of the chain, he could not leave the bench, he must sit upright. And so he stiffened his back, laid his hands on his lap, and waited, with his eyes on the gun.

Through the port-hole he could see the English gunner. He saw the fuse in his hand. He counted the seconds; wondered, even, how the fellow could be so deliberate. He heard the explosions all around, and speculated. Would the next be his turn? Or the next? Would it be painful? What was the next world like? And would his body be badly mangled?

The gunner had the match ready, when the lad's lips moved, and a cry broke from them—a cry which astonished him as he uttered it, for he had no notion that his brain was busy with such matters.

"O, my Father, have pity on my poor soul! I have loved all men and one woman. Give comfort to her, and have mercy on my poor soul!"

As the last word dropped from his lips, a

great calm fell upon him, and his eyes rested quietly on the gunner's hand as the man set the lighted match to the touch-hole of the gun.

* * * * * *

It was night when Tristram opened his eyes again. A pale ray of moonlight slanted across his face. His head was pillowed on something soft and warm. He lay for a while and stared at the moonlight; and by degrees he made out that it was pouring through a rent in the galley's side. Then he turned his head and lifted himself a little to see what it was on which his head rested. It was the dead body of one of the three overseers, who had been killed almost by the first shot fired by the frigate.

He pulled himself up, and crept towards the bench; then put a hand down to his feet. The ring was there, but no chain. Next he felt along the bench with a wish—quite stupid—to get back to his seat. His comrades were still lying on their faces. He imagined for a moment that their foolish fears still held them there, and he laughed feebly. He was weak, but felt no pain from any wound, nor suspected that he was hurt.

Then he began to eye the fellows roguishly, taking a malicious pleasure in the continuance of their terror. He tittered again, and suddenly found himself out of patience with them.

"Come, get up—get up! The danger's all over long ago."

He received no answer, and put out his hand towards the nearest. It was the Turk—a fellow who had been a janissary, and had the reputation of not knowing what fear was.

"Hullo, Ysouf! Get up, for shame—get up, man! And you—that we called so brave!"

Ysouf lay still. Tristram bent forward and took his hand.

The hand came away from the body. It was icy cold.

Still holding it, Tristram leant back and stared; and as he stared a pettish anger took him. He tossed the hand back on the body. And now for the first time he began to hear; and as this lost sense crept back to him he knew that the place was full of moaning, and that over his head feet were trampling to and fro. The noise caused him agony, and he put his two hands to his ears.

He was sitting in this posture when he felt something warm and moist trickle down his body, which was naked to the waist. He took a hand from his ear and put it to his breast. It was all wet, but in the darkness nothing could be distinguished. Suspecting, however, that it must be blood from some wound, and following

the smear with his fingers, he found that his shoulder, near the clavicle, was pierced right through. There was no pain.

Then he began to feel himself all over, and found another gash in the left leg, below the knee. He searched no more, feeling that it was useless, as he was bound to die in a little while. The men before him and behind him were dead. Of eighteen men on the three benches he—who had been blown the full length of the coursier—was the only one left; and all owing to the explosion of one cannon only. But such was the manner of grape shot: after the cartouche of powder, a long tin box of musket-balls rammed in; and as the box breaks, destruction right and left.

As he sat, waiting listlessly for death, the sense of pain came suddenly upon Tristram; and then he swooned away.

VI.—The Frigate.

As soon as the galleys saw M. de la Paille-tine's signal, and turned reluctantly back from their chase, the capture of the *Merry Maid* became but a question of time. The *Merveille* was the first to come up, and, striking fairly at her stern, riddled her windows with a gust of artillery and prepared to board: a feat that was thrice

prevented by Captain Runacles and a couple of dozen marines, English and Dutch. Then followed Captain Denoyre with the *Sanspareil*, who approached from the starboard side, and lost both his masts as he did so. In fact, the execution done upon his galley was only second to that suffered by *L'Heureuse*. But as *Le Paon* followed from the same quarter, with the *Nymphe* and the *Belle Julie* heading down as fast as oars could take them, Captain Barker cast a look back and touched his old friend's arm.

The first of the merchantmen was entering the Thames.

"Better get back to the fo'c's'le, Jemmy, and intrench yourself."

Captain Runacles nodded. "And you?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm going down to the cabin—first of all."

Captain Runacles nodded again. They looked straight into each other's eyes, shook hands, and parted.

It was obvious that the men of the *Merry Maid* could no longer keep the deck. She was hemmed in on every side, and it only remained to board her.

Twenty-five grenadiers from each galley were ordered upon this service. Those of *La Merveille*

were the first to start, and they swarmed over the stern without opposition. But no sooner were they crowded upon the frigate's deck than a volley of musketry mowed them down. Captain Runacles and his heroes then ran back and entrenched themselves in the forecastle; and to advance to close the hatchway was certain death. Nor were they forced to surrender until long after the English flag was hauled down: and, indeed, were only silenced when M. de la Pailletine hit on the happy idea of setting fifty men to work with axes to lay open the frigate's deck. A score and a half of men were lost over this piece of work. However, the forecastle was carried at last by means of it; and the prisoners were brought on deck—among them Captain Runacles, with his right hand disabled.

"Are you the gallant captain of this frigate?" asked M. de la Pailletine, doffing his hat; for as yet he had received no sword in token of the *Merry Maid's* surrender.

"No, sir," Captain Runacles answered; "I have the honour to be his lieutenant."

"He is killed, perhaps?"

"I fancy not."

"Then where is he?"

"Excuse me, monsieur, it strikes me he has yet to be taken."

"But the ship is ours!"

"Well, monsieur, you have hauled down our colours, and I can't deny it. But as for the frigate, I doubt if you can call it yours just yet."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Why, simply that you have not yet taken Captain Barker; and excuse me if, knowing Captain Barker better than you can possibly do, I warn you that that part of the ship which he sees fit to occupy at this moment will probably be dangerous for some time to come."

As if to corroborate his words, at this moment the hush which had fallen upon the frigate's deck was broken by the report of a fire-arm, and two French grenadiers rushed upon deck from below and came forward hurriedly, one with a hand clapped to a wound in his shoulder.

"That," said Captain Runacles, "is probably Captain Barker. There is a shutter to his cabin door."

"But this is trivial," exclaimed the French Commodore, frowning.

"If Monsieur will excuse me, it is scarcely so trivial as it looks. Captain Barker is within ten paces of the powder-magazine. Moreover, between him and the powder-magazine there is a door."

M. de la Pailletine jumped in his shoes. He rushed aft to the companion leading to the captain's cabin, and called on him to surrender.

"Go away!" answered a very ill-tempered voice from below.

"But, sir, consider. Your ship is in our hands——"

"Then come and take it."

"——your gallant officers have surrendered. You have behaved like a hero, and there is not one of your enemies but honours you. Monsieur, it is magnificent—but come out."

"I shan't."

"Monsieur, even this noble obstinacy extorts my veneration; but permit me to inquire, How can you help it?"

"Very simply, sir. Time is of no concern to me. I have plenty of victuals and ammunition down here; and if any man comes to take my sword I shall kill him."

"You cannot kill five or six hundred men."

"No; when I am bored, I shall fire the powder-magazine."

"Monsieur——"

There was no answer but the sound of a man blowing his nose violently, and the ring of a ramrod as it was thrust home. It was absurd that one man should hold a ship against

hundreds. Nevertheless, it was the case, and the Commodore did not see his way out of it.

"Permit me, sir," said Captain Runacles, stepping forward, "to add my assurance, if such be needed, that Captain Barker is a man of his word."

The Commodore essayed gentler tactics.

"Listen, monsieur," he called down.

"Go away!"

"I have the pleasure to announce to you that you shall meet only with such treatment as your bravery deserves. Dismiss all apprehension of imprisonment——"

At this point he skipped backwards with such violence as to knock a couple of sailors sprawling. A bullet had embedded itself in the timbers at his feet.

He determined to use summary measures, and ordered twelve grenadiers, with fixed bayonets, to advance to the cabin door, break it open, and overpower the Englishman.

The twelve men advanced as they were bidden. The sergeant was half-way down the ladder, with his detachment at his heels, when the report of a musket was heard, and down he dropped with a ball in his leg. The grenadiers hesitated. Another shot followed. It was pretty clear that the besieged man had plenty of fire-

arms loaded and ready. They scrambled up the steps again. "It was all very well," they said; "but as they could only advance in single file, exposing their legs before they could use their arms, the Englishman from behind his barricade could shoot them down like sheep."

M. de la Pailletine stamped and swore, upbraiding them for their cowardice. He was about to order them down again when a diversion occurred.

A door slammed below, a wheezing cough was heard, and Captain Barker's head appeared at the top of the ladder.

"Which of you is the French captain?"

M. de la Pailletine lifted his hat.

"H'mph!"

He stepped up on deck, and the French officers drew back in sheer amazement. They looked at this man who had defied them for pretty near an hour. They had expected to see a giant. Instead they saw a tiny man, humpbacked, wry-necked, pale of face, with a twisted smile, and glaring green eyes, that surveyed them with a malicious smile. His wig was off, and his bandaged scalp, as well as his face, was smeared black with powder; and it appeared that he could not even walk like other men, for he moved across the deck with a gait that was

something between a trot and a shamble, and indescribably ludicrous.

Yet all this abated his dignity no whit. He trotted straight up to M. de la Pailletine (whose astonishment mastered his manners for the moment, so that he stared and drew back), and working his jaw, as a man who has to swallow a bitter pill which sticks in his mouth, he held out his sword without ceremony.

"Here you are," he said: "I've done with it; can't waste words."

"Sir," the Commodore answered, bowing, "believe me, I receive it with little gratification. The victory is ours, no doubt; but the honour of it you have wrested from us. Sir, I am a Frenchman; but I am a sailor too; and my heart swells over such a feat as yours. Suffer me, then, to remind you that your present captivity is but the fortune of war, against which you have struggled heroically; that your self-sacrifice has saved your fleet; and that, as France knows how to appreciate gallantry in her adversaries, your bondage shall be merely nominal."

"H'mph," said the little man, "fine talk, sir, fine talk. As for the ships, I saw the last of 'em slip into the Thames, ten minutes since, from my cabin window. Sorry to keep you parleying so long, but couldn't come out before."

He blew his nose violently, cocked his head on one side, and added——

" . . . though, to be sure, sir, your words are devilish kind—devilish kind, 'pon my soul!"

M. de la Pailletine, with a pleasant smile, held out his sword to him.

"Take it back, Monsieur—take back a weapon no man better deserves to wear. Forget that you are my prisoner: and, if I may beg it, remember rather that you are my friend."

The face of the little hunchback flushed crimson. He hesitated, took back the sword clumsily, hesitated again, then swiftly held out his hand to M. de la Pailletine, with a smile as beautiful as his body was deformed.

"Sir, you have beaten me. I fought your men for awhile, but I can't stand up against this."

VII.—The Galley.

There was one man, however, who soon had reason to repent that the little man had been given his sword again.

Dark had fallen when M. de la Pailletine conducted him courteously over the frigate's side and across the deck of *L'Heureuse* towards his own cabin. Flinging the door open, he bowed, motioning Captain Barker to precede him.

As the hunchback entered, a figure rose from

beside the table under the swinging-lamp. It was Roderick Salt, who had been sitting there and sulking since the engagement began.

Captain Barker jumped back a foot and stared.

"*You!*"

Captain Salt had been expecting the Commodore, and was waiting to pay him a dozen satirical compliments on the issue of the engagement. Triumph shone in his eyes. It went out like a candle-flame before a puff of wind.

"You!"

In a flash the hunchback was running on him with drawn sword. M. de la Pailletine, in a trice, interposing, knocked the blade up and out of his hand. But he rushed on, and, dealing the traitor a sound blow on the face with his fist, began to kick and cuff and pummel him without mercy.

"Take him off—take him off!" gasped Captain Salt, but offered not the least resistance.

The Commodore, amused, and secretly pleased, caught the little man in his arms and dragged him away by main force.

"Messieurs," he said, slipping between them, and still panting with the effort, "circumstances compel me to leave you together for a while. But before I go, I must exact a *parole* from

both of you that you will keep the peace towards each other."

"But, Monsieur," Captain Barker exclaimed, "I want to kill him!"

"Doubtless; but if, sir, you have that consideration for me which you professed by shaking hands with me just now, you will refrain. Captain Salt will tell you, sir, that we have a small affair to discuss together as soon as we reach France again. When that discussion is over, no doubt he will be at your service."

The pair gave their promise reluctantly, and, as the Commodore left the cabin, sat down, facing each other across the table—Captain Salt with his back to the shattered stern-windows, which, a week or two before, Tristram had touched up with fresh paint and simple enthusiasm.

They knew nothing of this. Yet the first question asked by Captain Barker, after he had glared at his enemy in silence for twenty minutes, was—

"Where is Tristram?"

"Tristram?"

"Ay; your son. You have seen him, and have been with him."

"I do not know. I lost him."

"When? Where?"

"Two months since. We were travelling south together——"

"What right had you——"

"Excuse me, I was about to put a similar question. To begin with, you do not deny, I suppose, that the lad is my son?" He paused a second or two, and listened; for a sudden shout had gone up from the galley's deck above them. He continued, "Secondly, the boy is heir to considerable estates; thirdly, he has been so for many years; fourthly, I am legally an administrator of those estates; fifthly, you knew that I was alive—what the devil is that noise?"

"Never mind the noise. Proceed with your remarks."

"I have simply to say that you, Captain Barker, together with your friend Runacles, have for years been playing off a fraud on the law, and that I am going to exact my rights to the last farthing."

"Really, you must excuse me; but do you—a traitor, on board a French ship—imagine that you possess any rights in England?"

There was certainly a loud trampling of feet on the galley's deck at this moment. But Captain Barker knew that the French would make haste to clear their dead at once and get into motion with their prize, for the merchant-

men must, before this, have given the alarm, and the coast was continually patrolled by British cruisers.

"You have a very imperfect knowledge of my position, Captain Barker; and it naturally leads you to jump to very wrong conclusions. To begin with, you imagine me a traitor."

"I do."

"To whom? To King William, I suppose?"

"Well, as William is the king whose law seems most likely to interfere with your present threats, I will instance King William."

"You are mistaken. Until you came into sight this squadron was advancing on Harwich under my command. You understand? Well, before it started I had sent word to William of its intention. In other words, from first to last I designed the whole expedition in his interests. Had we gone on, by this time half a dozen British frigates would have been upon us."

"*My God! And they are here!*"

As Captain Barker yelled it out, a broad flame illumined the cabin, and the crash of broken glass and rending timbers mingled with a roar that shook the seas for miles.

And in the light of this thunderous broadside Captain Salt rose slowly, lifted his arms, swayed and dropped forward, striking the table with his

brow; then slid down upon the floor, stone-dead.

VIII.—The Galley (in the hold).

From his second swoon Tristram awoke to find the light of a lantern flashing in his face.

The *Merry Maid's* flag had scarcely been hauled down before night fell; and almost with its falling, while the men of the other galleys were helping to clear *L'Heureuse's* decks, they perceived lights twinkling off the mouth of the Thames.

At once concluding that these were the lights of English men-of-war sent to pursue them, they used the utmost despatch. Their first concern was to throw the dead overboard and stow the wounded in the hold. But so closely were they pressed by the fear of losing their prize and being made prisoners, that it is to be feared as many of the living were thrown over for dead as of those who were dead in reality.

This, at any rate, came near to being Tristram's fate. For when the keeper came to unchain the killed and wounded of his seat he was still without consciousness, lying among the corpses, bathed in their blood and his own.

"A clean sweep of this bench," said the keeper.

He and his fellows, therefore, without further examination, did but unchain the slaves and then fling them over. It was sufficient that the body neither spoke nor cried.

Tristram's comrades, it is true, were in no doubtful plight. The hand of death had impressed them beyond chance of mistake. They were thrown over limb by limb.

Tristram's was the only body that remained entire, and to all appearance he, too, was dead. Now, he had been chained by the left leg, in which (as we have said) he was severely wounded. The keeper, not knowing that the chain had been blown away, grasped this leg in his hand, felt for the ring, and tried to wrench it open.

Fortunately he tugged so lustily, and inflicted so sharp a pang in the wounded limb, that Tristram opened his eyes and sobbed with the anguish of it. The fellow let go his grasp.

Then, suddenly perceiving what their intention had been, the poor youth screamed out at the top of his voice—

"Please do not throw me over. I'm not dead yet!"

Upon this they carried him to a small chamber in the hold and tossed him down among a heap of groaning wounded, upon a

cable made up into a *rouleau*, perhaps the hardest bed on which a sick man can lie. About him were stretched indiscriminately petty officers, sailors, soldiers, and slaves. The air could reach this den only through a scuttle about two feet square, and the heat and stench were therefore something intolerable. A surgeon was at work among the sufferers. Reaching Tristram at length, he stopped the bleeding of his wounds with a little spirits of wine. He had no bandages; nor did he come again to see if his patient was dead or alive.

But, indeed, our hero was past caring for this, and when he regained consciousness after a third swoon it was to find himself in other hands.

For the pursuing English, aided by the wind (which had shifted a little further to the northward), had swept down upon the galleys and taken them, with their prize, and were now towing them triumphantly into Sheerness.

IX.—At Sheerness.

At ten o'clock next morning, after a prodigious breakfast at Sheerness, Captain Barker and Captain Runacles (whose wounded arm was slung in a silk kerchief) strolled down to the water-side to have a look at the strange vessels they had so obstinately defied. They explored

with especial care the unfortunate *L'Heureuse*, visiting first the Commodore's cabin, upon the boards of which the blood of Roderick Salt was hardly dry. It cannot be said that they felt much sorrow for his fate; for to pity a traitor was a height to which the faith of this pair of imperfect Christians did not soar. But they uttered no word of exultation, and quickly resumed their examination of the deck and hold, discussing this or that rent, debating over every splinter, proving that such and such a groove was ploughed by a ball from such and such an angle, and so on.

From the deck they descended to the long chamber where now row upon row of battered and deserted benches told of a tragedy more pitiful than any that can befall men who are free to stand up and fight for their lives.

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the little hunchback, standing with his arms folded and gloomily conjuring up the scene of yesterday; "Jemmy, we must have mown the poor brutes down like swathes of meadow grass. See here——"

He bent to examine a bench along which a broadening groove ran from end to end, telling a frightful tale.

But Captain Runacles did not answer. He was standing by a battered hole in the galley's

starboard side and looking down at the floor. A sunbeam fell through the hole and slanted along the planks of the flooring. His eyes were following this sunbeam, and his face was like a ghost's.

"Jemmy; come and look—here's a whole benchful accounted for at one swoop." Still Jemmy did not reply. The sunbeam drifting between the benches before him fell on a little patch of earth—a patch collected by one of the slaves whose comrades, humouring his whim, had brought him a handful or two in their pockets whenever they returned from shore. Upon this patch of earth were sunk the prints of a pair of feet, far apart; and between these footprints glimmered two lines of green, with two other lines uniting them.

They were two lines of pepper-cress, unharmed and fresh as if they grew in some sheltered garden, open only to the sun and rain. And as Captain Jemmy looked, the two green lines resolved themselves into two words; thus bracketed:

[SOPHIA.
TRISTRAM.]

"Jemmy—Jemmy, confound you! Do you hear?"

"Yes, yes." Captain Runacles turned sud-

denly and took his friend by the arm. "Yes—I see—very curious. Now let's go."

"You're in a great hurry."

"Yes, I want to go up and have a look at the wounded in hospital."

"Why, what's taken you? We haven't looked at the beak yet; and that's the most important of all."

"Very well, come along, and examine it while I run up to the hospital. Come"—he took the little man's arm—"I won't be gone ten minutes."

"Now, why on earth you've taken this fancy——" began Captain Barker as he regained the deck. And then he put his hands behind him and stared; for Captain Jemmy was already hurrying away for his life.

It was fifteen minutes before he returned, and the little man was hanging over the bows with half his body over the bulwarks and his head twisted to get a better view of the formidable beak.

"Jack!"

"Oh, you're back. I say, just lean over here——"

"Jack," Captain Runacles caught him by the coat-tails, and tore him back. "Now listen; you're not to speak; you're not to ask questions;

you're not to open your mouth. You've just to come—that's all."

He took the little man and hurried him ashore. He was breathless; but he ran Captain Barker over the gang-plank like a charging bull.

"One moment, Jemmy—Jemmy! Damme I *will* ask——"

"Ask away, then—and wait for the answer."

And so it happened that Tristram, stretched in the hospital at Sheerness, with his head to the wall, and thirty wounded men on either side of him, heard in his painless doze a sharp cry, and then a voice that seemed to call him across miles of empty space.

"O, my dear God! Tristram—my son, my son!"

He opened his eyes feebly, smiled, and whispering one word—"Dad!"—sank back into a dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XV.

BACK AT THE BLUE PAVILIONS.

Four weeks afterwards Tristram was put into a boat, and taken up to London, whence after two days' rest he was removed by easy stages back to Harwich.

At the gate of Captain Barker's pavilion he passed into the care of Dr. Beckerleg, who put him to bed at once and dared him to get up. As he was borne up the garden-path, Sophia peeped through a chink of the little blue door; and got not another glimpse of her lover for another six weeks.

It was a soft and sunny morning in October month when Dr. Beckerleg, having given his patient leave to dress and set foot outside the door for the first time, stepped down into the garden to seek the two captains and send them upstairs to help the invalid.

As he opened the front door a searching odour caused him to pause in the porch and sniff. He traced this odour round to the back of the house, and there found Captain Barker, Captain Runacles, and Narcissus Swiggs. Between them they had managed to clear the garden of an

enormous crop of weeds, of which they were now making a bonfire. Behind the thick and yellowish coils of smoke, Dr. Beckerleg could just discern the forms of the two captains. By their gestures they seemed to be engaged in an acrimonious discussion. Narcissus, little heeding, stolidly poked the bonfire with a charred stake.

"I will not," said Captain Runacles.

"But I say that you shall," said Captain Barker.

"The lad is yours, and yours only."

"He is yours also."

"By a cast of dice you won him."

"By law he was given back to you."

"You have brought him up."

"You found him again when I lost him."

"Yes, by means of an art which you taught him."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," interposed the doctor, advancing, "what is all this fuss?"

"Why," began Captain Barker, "I was proposing that, for the future, we should take equal shares in the superintendence of Tristram's education; and he won't listen to it."

"Certainly I won't," Captain Runacles assented stoutly.

The doctor looked from one to the other with a good-humoured smile.

"And why won't you?" he asked, addressing Captain Jemmy.

"Why won't I? Because, as you are aware —for you were present—we once cast the dice over this boy, and Jack won."

"Did he?"

"You know he did. He flung two sixes. Bless my heart, doctor, you *must* remember that!"

"I do, perfectly. And you—what did you throw?"

"I—well, I——"

"You threw the dice, and the box with 'em, out of the window: that's what you did."

"Very well, then. That settles it. I don't back out of my luck."

"Gentlemen," said Dr. Beckerleg, clearing his throat, "I have something to tell you. It is a fact, and I don't pretend to explain it. You know the proverb about doctors and their unbelief. Well, if I had been inclined—and I am not—to deny a controlling wisdom in this scheme of things, I should have been startled somewhat when Captain Barker flung those two sixes. That apparent chance should give an approval so decided to Captain Barker's adoption of this

orphan child was, to say the least, remarkable, for I thought then, and now I am sure, that no better father could be found for the babe."

"That's what I say," Captain Runacles put in.

"Do not interrupt me, please. I say no *better* father could be found. I did not say that none could be found as good. My dear Runacles, you tossed the dice out of the window and flounced off in a huff. As they had been borrowed, and without their owner's consent, I thought fit to step across the street and pick them up. They were lying not a yard apart, in the gutter. You were wrong, captain, in not giving them a look."

"Why?"

"*Simply because, as they lay, two sixes were uppermost.*"

The two captains stared at him.

"I give you my word," he said quietly.

"My dear Jack——"

"That settles it, Jemmy."

They took each other's hand.

"But excuse me," said Dr. Beckerleg, "this is not what I came to tell you. Just now I have given Tristram leave to stroll out into the garden for an hour, and he is waiting for you to dress him."

But here the doctor made a mistake, for when

they went upstairs there was no sign of Tristram. He and his clothes had disappeared.

They ran down to the front door, and looked around. There was no sign of him.

Finally, Dr. Beckerleg advanced to the little blue door in the hedge, opened it, and poked his head into Captain Runacles' garden. Then he turned softly and, putting a finger to his lip, beckoned to the others. They advanced on tip-toe and peeped through.

Beside a garden-bed, half a dozen yards away, and with their backs to the door, knelt Sophia and Tristram. The youth's left arm was around the girl's waist, and the youth's hair mingled with the girl's as unconscious of observation they bent over the mould. It was the same mould in which Sophia, years before, had buried her doll, and now Tristram was helping Sophia to sprinkle it with peppercress seed; holding her right hand as she traced this:—



The watchers withdrew as softly as they had advanced. But on his way back to the bonfire, Captain Barker darted into the house and emerged again with an armful of green volumes.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked Dr. Beckerleg.

The little man trotted round and shot his burden right on top of the pile which Narcissus had by this time stirred into a blaze.

"There doesn't seem to be any further use for 'em," he explained, panting and running back to the house.

He fetched another armful, and then another; and as he discharged the last upon the bonfire, turned and laid a hand upon Captain Runacles' arm.

"Jemmy, old friend, we needn't to have made such a fuss about it, after all."

THE END.

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